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Best Practices for the Treatment of Agitated Adults in the ED

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purpose & background

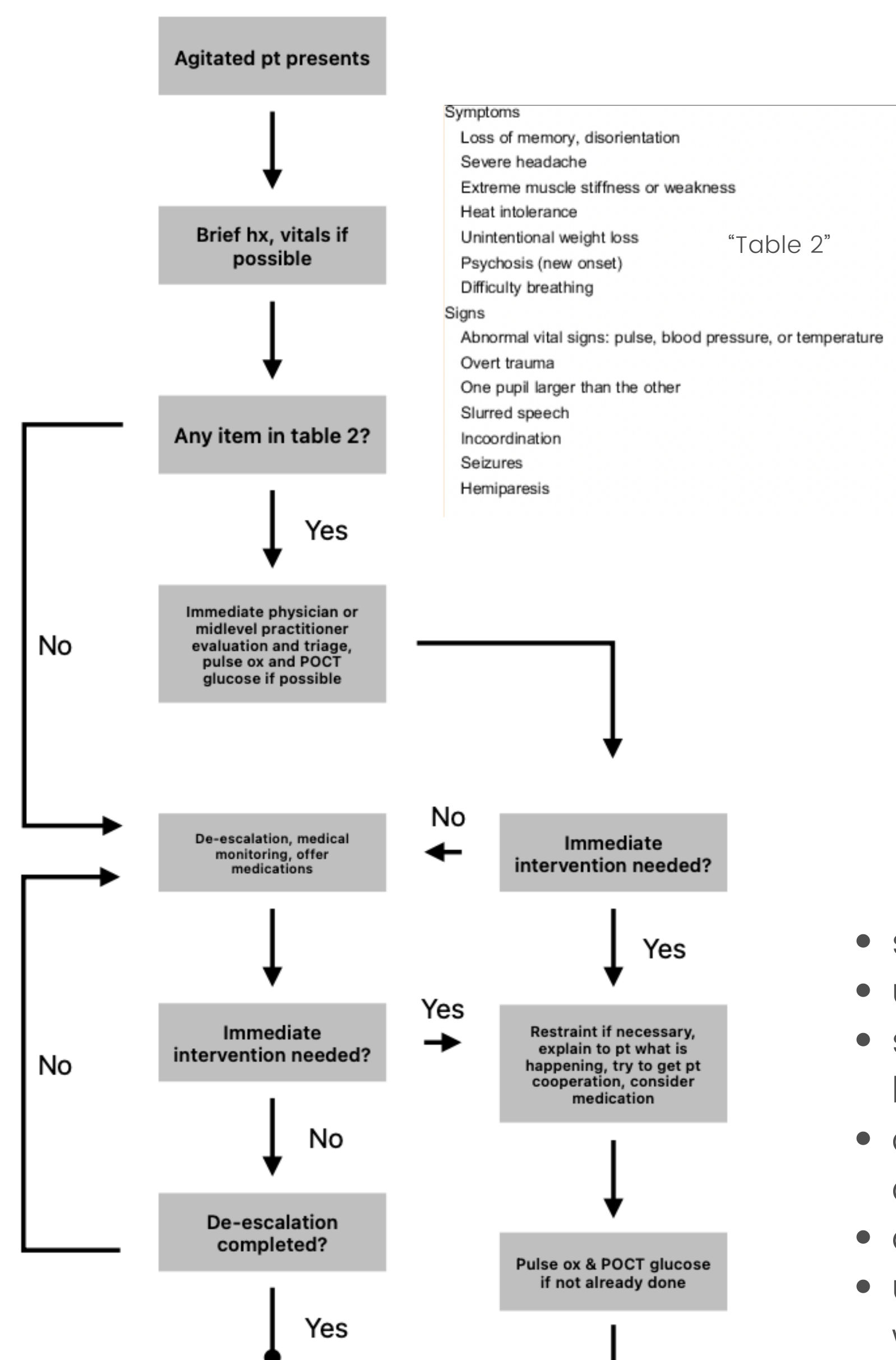
In the profession of nursing, every patient scenario is different. In terms of how to handle these scenarios, there are many ways to go about it. However, this can become hard to navigate when patients begin to get aggressive and combative. One of the possible options that has been seen to handle situations like this is through the use of medication, a common practice. Although the use of anti-psychotic medication works to calm down a patient and reduce the level of aggression, it isn't always the most sensitive option. Verbal de-escalation of patients is a far less aggressive treatment and lessens the need for harsh medication.

implications into nursing practice

- Nurse should always look for the least harsh forms of treatment for their patients
- Nurses are taught to go through the stages of de-escalation, beginning with verbal means and ending with restraints if, and only if, all other means have been exhausted
- If restraints, both physical and chemical, are necessary, patients need to be assessed every hour to ensure their safety

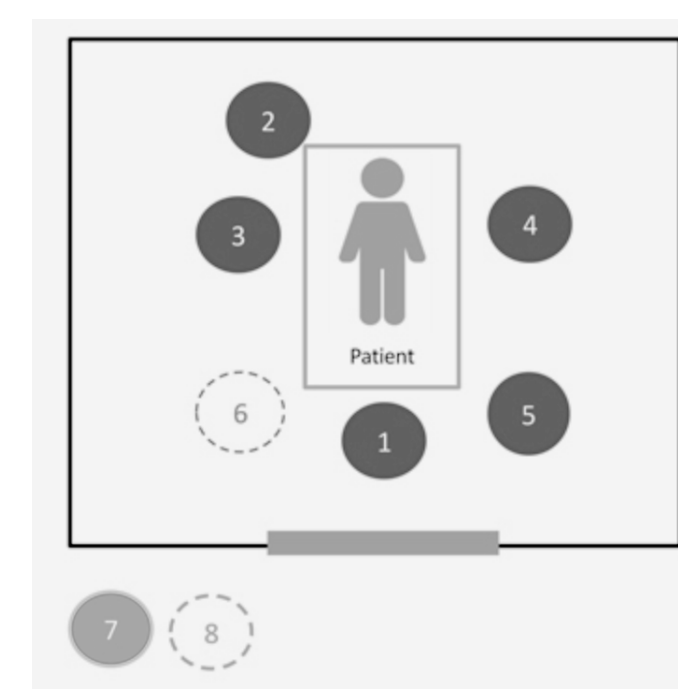
clinical implications

Project BETA Pathway



(Nordstrom et al. 2012)

“Security Alert” Response Team



1. MD or psychiatrist (team leader)
2. Security officer
3. Nurse
4. Patient Care Technician
5. 2nd security officer
6. 2nd nurse (if needed)
7. Outside officer(s)

(Wong et al. 2022)

Verbal De-escalation Techniques

- speak in short sentences
- use a calm voice throughout
- set firm boundaries, such as “that behavior is inappropriate”
- offer simple choices so they can be more comfortable
- allow them to respond to your statements
- use the person’s name to try to reason with them
- don’t point out the consequences of their agitation

(Jubb & Black, 2019)

findings

- A study done by researchers at Frontiers in Psychiatry has proven that through the use of verbal de-escalation, “the incidence rate of aggressive events was 73% lower” (Celofiga et al., 2022).
- “The proportion of patients with recurrent aggressive incidents in the experimental group decreased from 7.6 to 1.9%” (Celofiga et al., 2022) with the use of verbal de-escalation techniques.
- Another study done by the Dolan Consulting Group has showing that the training of verbal de-escalation itself has proven helpful. “Of the studies that measured incidents of physical violence, 52% of the studies found a decrease in the number of violent incidents after the training and 100% of the studies found a decrease in the severity of violent incidents after the training (Johnson, 2022).

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