What is your favorite chief complaint?

A. Dizzy
B. Dizzy
C. Dizzy
D. Dizzy
740,000 annual ED visits

35% Lifetime Incidence

Sun, B, *Acad Emerg Med* 2013
Acute Issues

ABC’s & Trauma
Why?
Why?

Cardiac
- Arrhythmia
- Heart Block
- ACS
- Channelopathy
- Structural
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Step 1

“I know what happened”

“I don’t know what happened”
Every question means something

Did he actually pass out → Syncope vs Pre-Syncope
For how long → arrhythmogenic vs structural or metabolic
Did he hit the ground → Head or neck trauma?
What were the preceding symptoms → Palpitations or aura or dizziness?
How does he feel now → postictal or dizzy?
Bit lip or incontinent → Seizures
Seizure activity
PMHx → Predisposing factors
Quick Cases
16 y/o girl with recent fever, fatigue, and abdominal pain

• More Questions?
• More exam?

Ruptured spleen from Mono
82 y/o male w/ frequent falls, passing out

- More Questions?
- More exam?

Chronic Subdural Hemorrhage from falls
60 y/o female passed out and still feels weak

• More Questions?
• More exam?

Recently added 2 new antihypertensives
28 y/o male with syncope after MVC yesterday

• More Questions?
• More exam?

Liver Laceration
17 y/o female passed out with significant recent weight loss

- More Questions?
- More exam?

Hypokalemia after vomiting from bulimia
38 y/o female passed out

“I felt really dizzy and then blacked out. I almost passed out earlier this morning”

Follow up Q’s?

• Palpitations
• Pregnancy
• Abdominal Pain
• Vaginal Bleeding
• Seizure hx
Some Stats

• 1 in 50 pregnancies are ectopic!
• Classic triad occurs <50% of time
  • Abdominal Pain
  • Amenorrhea
  • Vaginal Bleeding
• Syncope is presenting symptom ~20% of time

Barnhart K, NEJM 2009
38 y/o female passed out

“I don’t know what happened”

**Move to bystanders**

- If no bystanders ->
  - Look for meds or bracelet
    - Anti-epileptics
    - Insulin
    - New meds – anti HTN

Key exam findings?
Supporting Evidence

Seizure History

Postictal Phase

Bit Tongue

Incontinent Urine

Aura

The Phases of a "Tonic-Clonic" Seizure

The "Aura" Phase
- Light-headedness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Hallucinations
68 y/o male passed out

But now he’s awake

And feels fine

And wants to RMA
The Vagal

Vasovagal Syncope → Emotional, Fatigue
Situational Syncope → Distended viscera (stomach, bladder)
Carotid Sinus Syncope → Tight neck

1. Abrupt withdrawal of sympathetic tone
2. Increase in parasympathetic tone
3. Rapid autocorrection
“My heart was beating really fast and then I woke up on the floor”

• Assessment?
• Questions?
• Plan?
“I get really nervous sometimes and feel like I will pass out – I guess this time I did”

• Assessment?
• Questions?
• Plan?
Need to catch it!
- Admit to hospital
- Telemetry, echo
- Holter monitor
- Zio Patch
- Loop recorder

Once caught -> treat!
- Ablation, meds, AICD
Things To Remember

• Passing out is a LOT of things and SUPER common
• Cardiac issues are the most worrisome
• Minimum ECG & D-stick
• But there are many other causes
  • Hypovolemia from missed trauma
  • Ectopics
  • Electrolytes
  • Dehydration

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