INTRODUCTION TO CLINICAL THINKING – VINDICATES

Kevin Moynahan, MD
moynahan@email.arizona.edu
Department of Medicine

Paul Gordon, MD
pgordon@email.arizona.edu
Department of Family and Community Medicine

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Define the letters in the VINDICATES mnemonic.
2. Review a patient’s written History & Physical examination and identify broad-based and appropriate possible diagnoses using VINDICATES.
3. Assess the rationale for using VINDICATES.

VINDICATES is a mnemonic that helps us in the process of clinical thinking. After completing the history and physical examination, we generate a list of problems. We look at this list of problems and search for patterns. VINDICATES helps organize our thinking. It is one of many medical mnemonics that assists us in moving from a patient’s symptom to a diagnosis.

Vascular
Inflammatory/Infectious
Neoplastic
Degenerative
Intoxication/Drugs
Congenital
Allergic/Autoimmune
Traumatic/Iatrogenic
Endocrine/Metabolic
Sychosocial

In completing the VINDICATES mnemonic it is important to maintain the broadest possible list of diagnoses. ALL possibilities are listed. If completing this as a group, there should be no discussion. ALL possibilities get listed. (In the next step of
generating a differential diagnosis, the list is shortened and prioritized).

When working with VINDICATES it is not important precisely where a specific diagnosis gets listed, but rather only that it gets listed. Someone may suggest a possibility as an inflammatory cause – someone else may think it's an autoimmune cause. It doesn't matter, it only matters that it gets listed.

After pursuing a specific diagnosis and learning that we're incorrect, VINDICATES provides us with the broad thinking that allows us to return and entertain a different diagnosis.