CASE STUDY

Mrs. Dolan

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THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

**Level of difficulty:** Easy

**Overview:** This case requires the nurse to prepare Mr. and Mrs. Dolan for Mrs. Dolan’s emergent surgical procedure. Following surgery, the nurse must provide discharge teaching to educate Mrs. Dolan on the care of her temporary colostomy. Priority nursing considerations for the client living with a colostomy are reviewed.
Client Profile

Mrs. Dolan is a 46-year-old female who presented to the emergency department three days ago with complaints of abdominal pain, fever, and diarrhea for almost two weeks. Upon examination in the emergency room, Mrs. Dolan was found to be dehydrated with a potassium (K+) level of 2.8 mEq/L, erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) of 37 mm/hr, and white blood cell (WBC) count of 16,000 cells/mm³. She was positive for a urinary tract infection and an abdominal/pelvic computed tomography (CT) scan confirmed the diagnosis of diverticulitis. Mrs. Dolan was admitted to the hospital. She was started on intravenous (IV) fluids with potassium chloride (KCl) supplementation. She was also prescribed IV antibiotics and morphine sulfate for pain management. She has been nothing by mouth (NPO) since admission three days ago.

Case Study

After three days of IV fluids, antibiotics, and bowel rest, Mrs. Dolan’s K⁺ level is 3.7 mEq/L, ESR is 30 mm/hr, and WBC count is 15,000 cells/mm³. Her vital signs are blood pressure (BP) 114/68, radial pulse/heart rate (HR) 102, respiratory rate (RR) 18, and temperature of 103°F (39.4°C). Mrs. Dolan has a follow-up abdominal/pelvic CT scan. The CT scan reveals that Mrs. Dolan’s diverticulitis has not responded to conservative medical management and an abscess has developed. Surgical intervention is necessary and she is scheduled for surgery the next morning.

Questions

1. Briefly discuss the potential complications associated with acute diverticulitis.
2. Which assessment findings are of concern in Mrs. Dolan’s case?
3. Describe Mrs. Dolan’s preoperative care needs.
4. What are the potential complications associated with abdominal surgery that Mrs. Dolan should be informed of prior to giving consent for the surgical procedure?
5. Describe the purpose of the following advance directive alternatives: living will, health care proxy, durable power of attorney.
6. During the immediate postoperative phase of Mrs. Dolan’s care, what should the nurse assess?
7. What is a stoma and how are the following three types of stomas surgically created: end stoma, double-barrel stoma, and loop stoma?
8. Generate two to three key points to address when providing Mrs. Dolan with colostomy care education regarding each of the following: stoma assessment, skin protection, pouch care, diet, medications, sexuality issues, and community resources.
9. Prioritize three nursing diagnoses appropriate for the client living with a colostomy.
10. It has been three weeks since discharge, and Mrs. Dolan and her husband are eating at a restaurant. Mrs. Dolan is trying to decide between the following three meal choices: (a) corned beef and cabbage, (b) spaghetti with tomato sauce, and (c) salmon with baked potato. Which meal should Mrs. Dolan chose in order to follow the nurse’s instructions regarding appropriate diet guidelines?