

*Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care in Humanitarian Settings: Select Signal Functions*

**Case Study: Fever After Childbirth**

**ANSWERS**

Mrs. E is a 35-year-old para three. Mrs. E’s husband has brought her to the health center today because she has had a fever and chills for the past 24 hours. She gave birth to a full-term infant at home 72 hours ago. Her birth attendant was the local traditional birth attendant (TBA). Labor lasted two days and the TBA inserted herbs into Mrs. E’s vagina to help speed up the child­birth. The newborn breathed spontaneously after birth and appears healthy.

Assessment (history, physical examination, screening procedures/laboratory tests)

1. What will you include in your initial assessment of Mrs. E? Why?
   * *History of labor*
   * *Presence of chills/fever/pain/vaginal bleeding*
   * *History of malaria, HIV, or anemia*
   * *Vital signs*
   * *Uterine tone and tenderness*
2. What particular aspects of Mrs. E’s physical examination will help you make a diagnosis or identify her problems/needs? Why?

* *Fever greater than 38*°*C*
* *Chills or malaise*
* *Uterine tenderness or sub-involution*
* *Purulent or foul lochia*
* *Signs of shock*
* *Pulmonary edema*

Diagnosis (identification of problems/needs)

You have completed your assessment of Mrs. E, and your main findings include the following:

*History*

Mrs. E admits that she has felt weak and lethargic, has abdominal pain, and has noticed a foul-smelling vaginal discharge. She does not have pain when she urinates and does not live in an area with malaria. She had a tetanus immunisation and a booster 3 years ago. It is unknown whether her placenta was complete.

*Physical Examination*

* Vital signs: temperature 39.8°C, pulse 136 beats per minute, respirations 24 per minute
* Pale, lethargic, and slightly confused
* Uterus at 1 cm below the umbilicus and tender
* Foul-smelling vaginal discharge, no tears or lesions
* Cervix is 2 cm dilated with cervical motion tenderness

1. Based on these findings, what is Mrs. E.’s diagnosis (problem/need)? Why?

* *Puerperal sepsis due to elevated temperature and abdominal tenderness. The lethargy and confusion raise suspicion for sepsis.*

Care provision (planning and intervention)

1. Based on your diagnosis (problem/need identification), what is your plan of care for Mrs. E? Why?

* *Draw/send blood cultures if lab facilities available*
* *Start IV fluids, first dose antibiotics, and prepare to transport/refer*
* *Plan on IV antibiotics x 48 hours fever free*

1. Based on these findings, what is your continuing plan of care for Mrs. E? Why?

* *Antipyretics while febrile*
* *Uterine evacuation if needed*
* *Bed rest, perineal hygiene, newborn with mother*