Respiratory Infections in Nursing Homes

Mallory Mc Clester Brown, MD
Clinical Assistant Professor
University of North Carolina
Department of Family Medicine
Chapel Hill, North Carolina
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1. General Principles of Medical Care for Nursing Home Residents, with a Focus on the Respiratory System

2. Common Respiratory Infections
   - Presentation and Treatment
   - Common Questions and Controversies
Basic Principles about Nursing Home Residents and Respiratory Disease
The Rule of Thirds

Of the ‘decline in normal function” seen as people age.....

1/3 is due to Disease
1/3 is due to Dis-use (or misuse)
1/3 is due to Physiological aging
We Have Lots of Respiratory Reserve

![Graph showing respiratory reserve](image-url)
Bad Teeth and Lung Disease

- Poor oral health → bacterial pathogens
- Bacteria get inhaled → aspiration pneumonia

Two-thirds of nursing home residents have bacterial pathogens in their dental plaque

Over half of nursing home pneumonias are due to aspiration
Plaque and Gingivitis
Mouth Care to Prevent Pneumonia

Pilot Studies

Weekly dental hygienist $\rightarrow$ 42% reduction in pneumonia mortality

Systematic mouth care after meals $\rightarrow$ 56% reduction in pneumonia
Mouth Care Without a Battle ©

* Individualized Mouth Care
  * for Persons with Cognitive and Physical Impairment

* Module 1: Basic Techniques
* Module 2: Managing Behavioral Challenges
* Module 3: Nurse Supervisor Training
* Module 4: Short Overview for Administrators / Advocates

* Continuing education credit available

More information: mouthcarewithoutabattle.org
Pneumonia and Dying

• Terminal bronchopneumonia occurs in most dying patients

• Relieving symptoms is crucial to quality of dying
A Nursing Home is a Community

- High population density (like a cruise ship)
- Lots of contact with others and certain parts of the environment
- Many persons are immunocompromised or at high risk for other reasons

**Implications**

- Infection control measures very important (and most common reason for survey citations)
- Resistant organisms will spread
Fever in Older Persons

Graph 1: Distribution of Routine (Non-Illness) Temperatures on 1,948 Nursing Home Patients
Concern About Overtreatment

Between 25-75% of antibiotic prescriptions in long term care do not meet evidence-based clinical guidelines.

Prescribing antibiotics “just in case” was accepted in the past, but now antibiotics should be given after careful, evidence-based consideration of risks and necessity.
“Infiltrate” on Chest X-Ray Does NOT equal Pneumonia

Infiltrate = a streaky appearance in one part of the lungs on x-ray

Radiologists cannot tell if streakiness on an x-ray is:

• Atelectasis (not taking a deep breath)
• Scarring from an illness long-ago or
• Pneumonia
Cough Scares Providers, Leading to Overtreatment

Research Result: Cough Alone Increases 3x the likelihood of a LTC Patient Getting Antibiotics
# Common Respiratory Infections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infection Type</th>
<th>Common Cause</th>
<th>Common Symptoms</th>
<th>Distinguishing Features</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common Cold</td>
<td>Virus</td>
<td>Nasal congestion/sneezing</td>
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<td>+/- fever</td>
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<td>Pneumonia</td>
<td>Bacteria or Virus</td>
<td><strong>Cough (sputum)</strong></td>
<td>Abnormal vital signs Abnormal lung exam Infiltrate on chest X-ray Mental status changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Pleuritic chest pain</td>
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Common Respiratory Infections
Case 1: Mr. Jackson

- 82 year old, never smoked
- 4 days of illness
- Prominent symptoms are runny nose and sneezing.
- Had sore throat on first two days, now gone.
- Mild, dry cough
- No dyspnea
- Energy level normal
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temperature</td>
<td>98.4°F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood Pressure</td>
<td>145/85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory rate</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulse</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulse ox</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental status</td>
<td>Baseline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung exam</td>
<td>Clear</td>
</tr>
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1. What is the **most likely diagnosis**?
2. What **treatment(s)** are indicated?
What can be done for upper respiratory infection?

- Reassure patient and/or family
- Monitor vital signs and worsening signs or symptoms
- Encourage fluids and rest
- Acetaminophen or NSAIDS for fever/pain
- Nasal saline spray/humidified air for congestion
- Consider cough medicine
“Sinus” and “Sinusitis”

• When people say they have “sinus” they don’t usually mean acute sinusitis.

• **Acute sinusitis** requires: purulent nasal drainage plus nasal obstruction and/or facial pain, pressure, or fullness, and (usually) fever.
  – Most is viral, a minority are bacterial
  – Proven effective: nasal steroids
  – Unproven effectiveness: antibiotics [but still they are overused]
Case 2: Mr. Leonard

- 76 year old non-smoker
- 5 days of illness
- Began with nasal congestion, sore throat
- Soon cough became main symptom, worse at night
- Small amount of sputum
- Decreased appetite, more tired but up and about
## More about Mr. Leonard

<table>
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<th>Value</th>
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<tr>
<td>Temperature:</td>
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<td>Scattered wheezes</td>
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What is Mr. Leonard’s Diagnosis?

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<th>Acute Bronchitis</th>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Cough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Low grade fever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Normal other vital signs/non-focal lung exam (often with expiratory wheezes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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What can be done for acute bronchitis?

- Reassure patient and/or family
- Monitor vital signs and worsening signs or symptoms
- Encourage fluids and rest
- Acetaminophen or NSAIDS for fever/pain
- Nasal saline spray/humidified air for congestion
- Cough medicine or inhaled bronchodilator
Most cases of bronchitis are VIRAL and won’t improve with antibiotic treatment.

65% of acute bronchitis cases in nursing homes did not follow evidence-based antibiotic treatment guidelines.

2nd most common reason for inappropriate antibiotic use in NHs.

Common Reasons for Antibiotic Treatment of Viral Respiratory Infections

1. Belief that antibiotics can help
2. “Just in case” pneumonia develops
3. Meeting patient/family expectations
Do Antibiotics Improve Cold and Bronchitis Symptoms?

Antibiotics:
- DO NOT shorten recovery time or improve symptoms
- DO increase adverse effects

Antibiotics for respiratory symptoms in moderate to severe COPD may be the exception, depending on the clinical situation.

References:
- Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2014 Mar 1, 245.
- Am Jour of Respir and Crit Care Med. 186, 8 (2012); 716-723
• Antibiotics do reduce pneumonia risk slightly – 40 courses are needed to prevent 1 case of pneumonia.
• If pneumonia develops, antibiotic resistance more likely

Nursing home residents with viral respiratory illness must be carefully monitored for signs or symptoms of pneumonia.

BMJ. 2007 Nov 10;335(7627):982
Studies show:

• Patient/family expectations for antibiotics are overestimated
• Satisfaction is not severely impacted when antibiotics not given
• Communication and education are key

Nursing staff have the opportunity to educate and reassure

J Gen Intern Med. 2014 Nov 6
How To Talk To Patients And Families About Viral Respiratory Illness

- **Inform** that resident is ill and staff is helping them – by providing symptom relief and monitoring

- **Advise** on illness course
  - Colds: up to 1.5 weeks
  - Bronchitis: up to 3 weeks

- **Respond** to concerns

- **Reassure** that antibiotics not needed
  - explain risks
  - explain that you will monitor

BMJ. 2008;337:a437
What Could You Tell Mr. Leonard’s Concerned Family?

Advise on illness course:

“His cough might last several more days to several weeks, and it may take him a while to feel better.”

Respond to concerns about symptoms:

“We’re going to help him feel more comfortable so his body can fight this virus. He’ll need plenty of fluids and rest. Also, we’ll give medicine for his fever and cough, and keep an eye on him.”
If the Family Asks Specifically About Antibiotics

“Mr. Leonard’s chest cold is caused by a virus, and antibiotics won’t help viruses. Giving him antibiotics when they aren’t needed can cause side effects and make it so that antibiotics won’t work when he really needs them. We will monitor him closely for any change in condition that might indicate a need for antibiotics.”
Case 3: Mrs. Gallagher

- 78 year old, smoker, COPD, on oxygen (2 L/min)
- 5 days of productive cough
- Increased dyspnea
- Pulse ox 93% (normal 93-95%)
- Temperature 100.0 °F
- Exam: rhinorrhea, nasal congestion, anterior wheezes.
- X-ray: no acute changes

1. What is the most likely diagnosis?
2. What treatment(s) are indicated?
Are Antibiotics Indicated for COPD Exacerbations?

• Cochrane systematic review (2012):
  – large beneficial effects patients admitted to an ICU
  – For outpatients and inpatients, results inconsistent

• Guidelines for COPD exacerbation:
  – Mild disease: start with inhaled bronchodilator, consider oral steroids. If inadequate relief, consider antibiotic
  – Moderate / severe disease → inhaled bronchodilator, oral steroids, and antibiotics
  – Monitor for signs of pneumonia

Ann Intern Med 2001;134:521-529..
Influenza in the Nursing Home

- Vaccinate all residents and staff
- Test residents with suspicious symptoms
- Infection control
  - Standard precautions
  - Droplet precautions
- Antiviral treatment
- Antiviral chemoprophylaxis
- Monitor for signs suggesting pneumonia

http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/ltc-facility-guidance.htm
Flu Season is usually November – April in cold climates, year round in the tropics.
When and Whom to Test for Flu

“Influenza testing should occur when any resident has signs and symptoms of influenza-like illness.”

CDC defines influenza-like condition as an unexplained illness characterized by:
• Fever > 100°F, 37.8°C
  PLUS
• cough and/or sore throat

for details on lab testing, check CDC website
http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/ltc-facility-guidance.htm
Dealing with a Flu Outbreak

- Definition: at least one laboratory confirmed case plus one other case that looks like the flu
- If outbreak occurs, implement:
  - Daily active surveillance of residents, health care personnel and visitors.
  - Droplet precautions for all residents with suspected or confirmed influenza
  - Antiretroviral treatment for all cases
  - Antiviral chemoprophylaxis for all non-ill residents, continuing at least 2 wks (until 7 days after last case)
- Review material on CDC website:

http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/ltc-facility-guidance.htm
Pneumonia
What Clinical Signs Suggest Pneumonia?

- Abnormal vital signs
  - Fever
  - Respiratory rate > 25 (90% sensitive, 90% specific)
  - Tachycardia
- Pulse ox drop of >3% (about 75% sensitive and 75% specific)
- New localized rales on physical exam
- Acute delirium

Three Main Types of Pneumonia

- **Aspiration pneumonia**
  - Most common type of pneumonia in NH patients
  - Affects 300,000 – 600,000 Americans annually
  - Oral bacteria predominate
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- Other bacterial pneumonia
  - Often spontaneous, can follow viral infection
  - Variety of organisms
Three Main Types of Pneumonia

- **Aspiration pneumonia**
  - Most common type of pneumonia in NH patients
  - Affects 300,000 – 600,000 Americans annually
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- **Other bacterial pneumonia**
  - Often spontaneous, can follow viral infection
  - Variety of organisms

- **Viral pneumonia**
  - Least common
  - Example -- influenza
Aspiration Pneumonitis vs Pneumonia

• Controversial area
  – When to diagnose?
  – When to treat?
  – How to prevent?
  – How best to treat?

• Pneumonitis – inflammation without infection

• Pneumonia – infection by a microorganism
Aspiration Happens Frequently

- Dysphagia affects up to 68% of elderly nursing home residents
- Small volume aspiration is frequent
- Sign: cough after swallowing
- Usually is cleared without development of pneumonia
When Is Aspiration Most Hazardous?

- Infection and heavy colonization in mouth
- Solid aspirate
- High volume
- Very ill and/or dying patient
Can Aspiration Pneumonia be Prevented?

- Thickened liquids do not reduce aspiration or pneumonia
- Posture adjustment (e.g. chin tuck) – limited benefit
- Diet modification leads to poor intake and greater use of supplements

Bottom line: Individualize, but do not torture patient with measures that may not work
“Regardless of prescribed diet consistencies, all residents continuously produce saliva, which is routinely swallowed between meals and at night. Consequently, many programs designed to prevent aspiration pneumonia concentrate on improved oral hygiene, which is definitely a modifiable risk factor, rather than dysphagia as such. They also modify medication regimens, because antipsychotics and sedatives significantly increase the risk of aspiration pneumonia.”

Monitoring For Signs And Symptoms of Pneumonia

- Fever (especially if >100.4 °F)
- Respiratory rate >25 breaths/minute
- Elevated pulse (>100 beats per minute)
- Oxygen saturation <94% on room air or >3% reduction baseline
- New or worsening shortness of breath
- Lung exam with focal changes

If pneumonia is suspected, contact the provider.
Should We Prescribe Antibiotics for Pneumonia at the End of Life?

- Antibiotics may prolong life over short term
- Do NOT provide comfort
- Can cause discomfort and adverse effects (such as diarrhea)
- Use depends on care goals
- Consider alternatives to antibiotics when comfort is main goal of care

Arch Intern Med. 2010;170(13):1102-1107
Encourage Shared Decision-Making
- Advance Directives Helpful -
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We can no longer use antibiotics “Just in case.”

We should use them “Just when needed.”
Thank You