

OPQRST Symptom Assessment

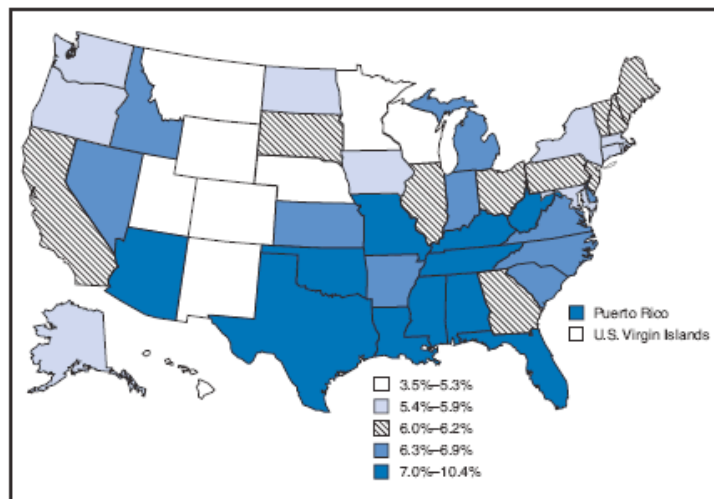
Obj. 6.9: Obtain subjective information from a patient using the OPQRST mnemonic



Heart Disease in the U.S.

Use the map below to answer questions 1-3.

FIGURE. Self-reported prevalence* of history of myocardial infarction or angina/coronary heart disease among adults aged ≥ 18 years — Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, United States, 2005



* Age adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population of adults.

Note: Myocardial infarction = heart attack; angina = heart pain

1. What was the self-reported prevalence of history of heart attack or heart disease in your state?
2. What geographical trends do you notice in the prevalence of heart attack/heart disease?
3. What factors do you think may account for these trends?

DISCUSS

Identifying Heart Attacks

Why do you think many heart attacks are difficult to predict and diagnose early?

NEW
INFO**Acute Illnesses & OPQRST****Review:**

The SOAP note (Subjective, Objective, Assessment, Plan) is a method of documentation used by providers to write out notes in a patient chart. The Subjective portion of the SOAP consists of all the questions asked to gather information. The SAMPLE history (Signs/symptoms, Allergies, Medications, Past history, Last oral intake, & Events leading to illness/injury) is an important part of the Subjective data gathering.

OPQRST-AAA:

Another critical portion of the Subjective section for an **acute illness** is the specific set of questions about the symptoms and history of present illness which may help in diagnosis and treatment. One **mnemonic** for this set of questions is OPQRST. This particular set of questions is often used methodically when a heart attack is suspected, but can also be used for a range of other illnesses such as headaches, stomach pain, and more. The table below summarizes the questions included in OPQRST.

VOCABULARY:

Acute illness: a disease with a rapid onset and/or a short course

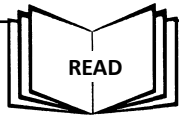
mnemonic: a learning device that helps one remember information

provocation: creating a negative response (in this case, the symptom in question)

palliation: to relieve the symptoms of a disease

| Letter | Meaning | Questions |
|----------|----------------------------------|---|
| O | Onset | What were you doing when it started (active, inactive, stressed)? Did it start suddenly, gradually, or is it part of an ongoing chronic problem? |
| P | Provocation or Palliation | Does any movement, pressure, or other external factor make the problem better or worse? Are the symptoms relieved with rest? |
| Q | Quality of the pain | Can you describe the pain? Is it sharp, dull, crushing, burning, tearing, or some other feeling? Is there a pattern, such as intermittent, constant, or throbbing? |
| R | Region and Radiation | Where is the pain located on the body? Does it radiate (extend) or moves to any other area? (<i>Heart attacks can radiate through the jaw and arms. Other referred pains can provide clues to underlying medical causes.</i>) |
| S | Severity | How would you rate your pain on a scale of 0 to 10? (0 is no pain and 10 is the worst possible pain.) Either "... compared to the worst pain you have ever experienced") or "... compared to having your arm ripped off by a bear". |
| T | Time (history) | How long has the condition been going on? How has it changed since onset (better, worse, different symptoms)? Has it ever happened before? |

Note: The questions do not have to be asked in the exact order listed. The patient interview should be conversational and have a smooth flow, so sometimes the order should be adjusted.



Know the Signs and Symptoms of a Heart Attack

About Heart Attack

- A heart attack happens when the **blood supply** to the heart is **cut off**. Cells in the heart muscle that do not receive enough oxygen-carrying blood begin to die. The more time that passes without treatment to restore blood flow, the greater the damage to the heart.
- Every year about **715,000 Americans** have a heart attack. Of these, **525,000** are a first heart attack and **190,000** happen in people who have already had a heart attack.¹
- About **15%** of people who have a heart attack will die from it.¹
- **Almost half** of sudden cardiac deaths happen outside a hospital.²
- Having high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol, smoking, having had a previous heart attack or stroke, or having diabetes can increase your chance of developing heart disease and having a heart attack.
- It is important to recognize the signs of a heart attack and to **act immediately** by **calling 911**. A person's chance of surviving a heart attack increases if emergency treatment is administered as soon as possible.

Symptoms of a Heart Attack

The National Heart Attack Alert Program notes these major signs of a heart attack:

Chest pain or discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center or left side of the chest that lasts for more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. The discomfort can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.

Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.

Shortness of breath. Often comes along with chest discomfort. But it also can occur before chest discomfort.

Other symptoms. May include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness.

If you think that you or someone you know is having a heart attack, you should **call 911 immediately**.

Source: CDC Heart Attack Fact Sheet

DISCUSS

One study showed that women are two times as likely than men to call 911 if they are showing signs of a heart attack. What might explain this finding?



Role Play: OPQRST Interview

Goal: Practice the OPQRST interview from both angles, the patient and the health care provider

Directions:

1. Choose your starting roles. One person will be an emergency room triage nurse. The other will be a patient who has driven to the hospital, worried about chest pain.
2. Patient uses the first column in the table to record brief details about the chest pain, so they are prepared to act convincingly and answer all questions.
3. Healthcare provider begins the patient interview by asking questions and use the first column in the table below to record the OPQRST information.
4. Switch roles and repeat, using the second column.

| | Patient #1 | Patient #2 |
|---|------------|------------|
| O | | |
| P | | |
| Q | | |
| R | | |
| S | | |
| T | | |

DISCUSS

What was most **challenging** about the OPQRST interview? *(Consider both the healthcare provider and the patient perspectives)*



Identifying OPQRST

Identify the correct portion of the OPQRST interview for each patient statement below.

- _____ 1. The pain in my head is a 9.5. It's the worst pain I've ever felt.
- _____ 2. My head throbs all over, as if someone is squeezing my brain.
- _____ 3. When I turn off all the lights my head feels better.
- _____ 4. It started last night around 11:30pm.
- _____ 5. My headache has started to move into my neck.
- _____ 6. It stopped hurting about an hour ago.



Write An OPQRST Interview Script

Goal: Practice the OPQRST interview for an acute illness

Directions:

1. Choose any acute illness.
2. Research the illness so you understand how a patient may respond when interviewed.
3. Write out the dialogue between the healthcare provider and patient for an OPQRST interview.
4. Find a partner who will agree to help you act out your script in case you are called on to present your interview next class.