

Informed Consent - Role Play

Case 1 - Acute Achilles Rupture

Physician: Lee Gold

You are the physician on duty in the emergency department of City Hospital, a large, university-affiliated teaching institution. Late in the evening, you are called to see a patient who has arrived in the ED, apparently without assistance. The patient, Dale Grant, presents with a slashed Achilles tendon. Dale is vague about just how the injury occurred but in response to your inquiry states that the wound was not self-inflicted. You examine the injury and believe that a surgical repair is necessary. A surgeon examines the wound and tells you that if the tendon is sutured within 24-36 hours, the patient will have a good recovery. If it is not treated, the patient will likely have a chronic limp.

Patient: Dale Grant

You are afraid of doctors, hospitals, needles, and all the medical things you have heard about that can hurt people. You came to the hospital because you knew the cut was really deep and you were afraid of bleeding to death. The truth is you don't remember all the details about how you got hurt because you had had a few drinks. Now the doctor is telling you you need surgery or your foot won't heal right. All you care about is not dying, and you just want them to stop the bleeding so you can leave.

Note: An important part of this exercise is for the doctor to evaluate whether Dale's decision-making capacity is impaired, especially temporary impairment due to intoxication.