

Pneumothorax/Collapsed Lung

Briefing: The patient, a lady in her 40s, a heavy smoker is seeing a lung specialist in a hospital in Tokyo. The specialist is concerned about her smoking habits as that prevents him from proceeding on with the surgery. The patient part in the dialogues in italics.

Reference:

Pneumothorax (気胸)

Chest tube/Needle Insertion (胸腔チューブ・針挿入)

Dyspnea/Shortness of breath (息の呼吸困難・息切れ)

Seeing a Specialist

D: Hi Mona, how are you feeling today?

P: Hi Dr. Not too bad actually. I have had a nightcap last night and that put me to sleep.

D: Brandy again? If it was just a nightcap then I approve of it. How is your attempt to quit smoking going? We talked about that last time.

P: Well you see...I have been smoking heavily since I was 25...it is hard to quit and those nicotine patches don't work at all....

D: No progress then? We will need to talk about that again then. I will keep repeating the same thing over and over until you understand. I sometimes feel that there is not much difference between adults and children but that's another topic.

P: OK...I am sorry to disappoint you...

D: Yes, well it is not me that you disappoint, you are disappointing yourself. Let's move along. I would like to ask you about any history of high blood pressure, heart attack, strokes or diabetes in your family?

P: My mother died from a heart attack. Otherwise no other illnesses.

D: OK. I will make a record of that in case your condition deteriorates and we may need to use a needle or chest tube but hopefully it won't come to that.

For now I am monitoring your condition with X-rays until the excess air is completely absorbed and your lung expands back to normal. I will need you take another X-ray today after my appointment. I will monitor your condition for another week so 2 weeks in total.

P: Sure. I understand. Did you say that I may need some oxygen?

D: Yes, you may. Supplemental oxygen speeds up the absorption process. I will make a decision based on the results from today's X-ray.

P: OK, what about the needle? Why would you need to use the needle?

D: Well you see the goal in treating a pneumothorax is to relieve the pressure on your lung. Relieving the pressure will allow your lung to re-expand. In some instances the needle or chest tube is used to prevent recurrences.

P: I see, thank you for explaining.

D: I am worried about your dyspnea that is shortness of breath that is why I keep encouraging you to quit smoking ASAP. Your condition will deteriorate with age so keep that in mind.

P: Yes, I do have this feeling of suffocation especially in the mornings...that makes me feel anxious and depressed. I am actually seeing a psychologist this late afternoon.

D: Good. Your mental wellbeing is as important as your physical wellbeing.

D: I will book you in for this Friday. That is 2 days from today. If there is no progress then we will move fast with the surgery.

P: Ok, thank you. Bye

Bye