**SHORTNESS OF BREATH**

**What leads to…?**

* Disease e.g.
	+ Tumour infiltration
	+ SVCO
	+ Pleural effusion
	+ Lymphangitis
	+ Abdominal distension
	+ Heart failure
	+ COPD
	+ Interstitial lung disease
	+ Cystic fibrosis
	+ MND
* Debility e.g.
	+ PTE
	+ Respiratory secretions
* Incidental e.g.
	+ Chest infection
	+ Asthma
	+ Anaemia
	+ Arrhythmia
	+ Anxiety / fear / panic

**What do you need to know?**

* Pattern of breathlessness
	+ When
	+ Precipitating factors
	+ Alleviating factors
	+ Associated features e.g. fever / sputum
* Oxygen saturation
* Overall condition and place on disease trajectory

**What can you do?**

* Remember that SOB is both frightening & difficult to treat
* Recognise / treat crises e.g. PTE, SVCO
* Recognise and explore anxiety / fear associated with breathlessness / disease / situation
* Relaxation
* Physiotherapy
* Avoid!
* Fan
* Open window

**What about drug treatments?**

* Treat the treatable e.g.
	+ Chest infection
	+ Bronchospasm
	+ Cardiac decompensation
	+ Pleural effusion
* Relieve anxiety
	+ Benzodiazepine e.g. lorazepam S/L
* Treat breathlessness
	+ Bronchodilators
	+ Steroids e.g. trial of dexamethasone
	+ Opioids (low dose)
* Treat respiratory secretions
* Oxygen (if low oxygen levels)
* Nebulised saline 0.9%
* Possible sedation in last stages of life

**Resources**

* NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Palliative Care Website <http://www.palliativecareggc.org.uk>
* MacMillan Cancer Support (Cancerbackup resources) <http://macmillan.org.uk>
* Roy Castle Lung Foundation <http://roycastle.org>
* Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland <http://chss.org.uk/>
* British Lung Foundation Breathe easy Support Network <http://www.lunguk.org/>
* Scottish Palliative Care Guidelines <http://www.palliativecareguidelines.scot.nhs.uk/>