CLINICAL CORRELATION: Coma and Brain Death/End of Life

Date: February 7, 2019 - 8:30 am

Reading Assignment: refer to posted handout

KEY CONCEPTS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Coma and Brain Death

1. Understand how coma occurs by involvement of the reticular activating system or diffuse involvement of cerebral cortex.

2. Describe the various findings in the unresponsive patient with regards to the motor system, breathing patterns, pupils and eye movements, and how certain abnormalities are associated with lesions in the cerebrum, midbrain, pons and medulla.

3. Explain the oculocephalic (“doll’s eyes”) and oculovestibular (“cold caloric”) reflexes and their significance.

4. Know which emergency measures are undertaken for the comatose patient and why.

5. Define brain death and persistent vegetative state and how these are clinically determined.

End-of-Life Issues in Neurology

1. Describe some of the problems and possible options involving nutrition or sedation in patients with progressive dementia or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

2. Explain the role of the physician in palliative care of neurological patients.