

Priority Topic: MENTAL COMPETENCY

Key Features:

For a single source of info on this topic: [Evaluating Patient Capacity AAFP 2001](#)

1. In a patient with a [diagnosis that may increase the likelihood of cognitive and/or functional impairment](#) (e.g. dementia, stroke, severe mental illness, head injury):
 - a) [Assess](#) the patient's [level of competence](#) in the context of the [decision\(s\)](#) that the patient needs to make, [recognizing that higher-risk decisions require higher cognitive capacity](#) .
 - b) [Explain](#) the [purpose](#) of the assessment and [attempt to gain permission before you begin the assessment](#) .
 - c) Include [other professionals](#) when appropriate.

What you should study:

- ✓ [Capacity Assessments CMPA 2020](#)
- ✓ [Evaluating Medical Decision-Making Capacity in Practice AAFP 2018](#)

2. In an otherwise well patient with [subtle changes in function](#) (e.g. family concerns, medication errors, repetitive questions, decline in personal hygiene):
- a) Perform an appropriate [assessment of cognitive and functional abilities](#) .
 - b) [Refer](#) for further assessment when necessary.

What you should study:

- ✓ [Evaluating Patient Capacity AAFP 2001](#)
- ✓ [Aid to Capacity Evaluation U of T 2000](#) **This 2-page form is included in the AAFP article but if you want to print it for clinical use, this is just a PDF of the form.**

3. When a patient is making [high-stakes care decisions](#) (e.g. surgery/no surgery, resuscitation status), think about the [need to assess their decision-making ability](#).

What you should study:

- ✓ [Capacity Assessments CMPA 2020](#)
- ✓ [Evaluating Patient Capacity AAFP 2001](#)
- ✓ [INESSS Niveau d'intervention](#)

4. When [capacity assessment](#) is required, [actively assess the patient's ability](#) to understand, appreciate, reason, and express a choice.

What you should study:

- ✓ [Evaluating Patient Capacity AAFP 2001](#)
- ✓ [Le médecin et le consentement aux soins](#)

Section 2.3.1 Aptitude à consentir aux soins

5. When **impaired decision-making ability** is identified, **attempt to establish severity, reversibility, and duration** in order to plan treatment and regular reassessment.

What you should study:

✓ **Evaluating Medical Decision-Making Capacity in Practice AAFP 2018**

6. When a patient **refuses to participate in capacity assessment** :

a) **Document** their refusal.

b) Continue to **engage in the provision of safe care** that is **acceptable to the patient**.

c) **Revisit** the assessment when indicated.

d) Pursue the **need for a substitute decision maker** when necessary.

7. When **involuntary treatment** is indicated:

- a) Initiate the **certification process**.
- b) **Collaborate** with colleagues/family regarding the procedures required.
- c) **Document and communicate** according to **legal** requirements.
- d) **Help** the patient and family **understand** why this is necessary.
- e) **Clarify your continuing role** in the care of the patient.

What you should study:

- ✓ **When a person presents a danger to him or herself or others Douglas**
- ✓ **Chapter 2 : Practical Guide to Mental Health Rights MSSS Québec 2009**
- ✓ **Chapitre 2 : Guide pratique sur les droits en santé mentale MSSS Québec 2009**

8. When **involuntary interventions that impact autonomy are required** (e.g. loss of driver's license), include **management of the emotional impact** on the patient and **possible effects on the physician-patient relationship** as parts of the treatment plan.