

## Case: F/16, Miss Ellen, dry hacking cough

**Doctor:** What brought you here Ellen?

**Patient:** (Coughing) I'm so sorry.

**Doctor:** How long have you been coughing?

**Patient:** It's been three months already.

**Doctor:** So it got worse recently?

**Patient:** Yes doctor.

**Doctor:** Do you notice some phlegm?

**Patient:** No.

**Doctor:** Is the cough there all the time? Or it's on and off?

**Patient:** It's been here all the time.

**Doctor:** Is there any thing that makes your cough worse? Like positional changes? Seasonal changes? After eating?

**Patient:** Positional changes like lying down makes me cough even worse.

**Doctor:** Is there anything that makes your cough better? Have you taken any medication?

**Patient:** I took some cough medication.

**Doctor:** So do you have any other symptoms besides a cough? Any fever? Chills? Night sweats?

**Patient:** I have had on and off fever.

**Doctor:** Have you noticed any changes in your weight? Any changes in you appetite? Any changes in your bowel habits?

**Patient:** I've lost weight, though my appetite seemed normal and my bowel habits are regular.

**Doctor:** Have you experienced shortness of breath? Have you felt any chest pain?

**Patient:** Yes, there were times when felt like I was catching my breath and I also experienced chest pain sometimes.

**Doctor:** Have you ever had wheezing? Headaches? Runny nose? Sore throat? Postnasal drip?

**Patient:** Yes, I have had postnasal drip.

**Doctor:** Have you ever had Asthma? Gastric acid problems? Allergic rhinitis? Drug allergies? Any heart problems?

**Patient:** No, I haven't had any of those.

## Test Your Knowledge

1. Why do you think the doctor asked about changes in weight, appetite, and bowel habits?
2. What could be the possible cause of the patient's problem?

# Hacking Cough

**Doctor:** Do you have any other problems in your lungs? Stomach? Liver? Kidneys?

**Patient:** No doctor.

**Doctor:** Have you ever had any surgeries?

**Patient:** I never had one in my life.

**Doctor:** Is there anybody in your family being sick now? What about at work?

**Patient:** Actually, I work at the day care center and the kids are always sick.

**Doctor:** Do they have the same cough as you do? A cough without phlegm?

**Patient:** Some kids cough with phlegm but some also have none.

**Doctor:** Is there anybody who has had tuberculosis around you?

**Patient:** No doctor.

**Doctor:** Is there anybody in your family having other disease such as diabetes? Heart problems? High blood pressure?

**Patient:** My father has high blood pressure.

**Doctor:** Now I'd like to ask some personal questions which can be helpful for me to figure this out better. Is it okay with you?

**Patient:** No problem doctor.

**Doctor:** So how long have you worked in the day care center?

**Patient:** About a year doctor.

**Doctor:** Do you drink? Do you smoke? Do you use any illegal drugs?

**Patient:** I drink occasionally but I haven't tried smoking and using illegal drugs.

**Doctor:** Now, I'd like to ask you about your sexual life. I know this is very private. But sometimes this can give us a big hint. Will you not mind?

**Patient:** Not at all, I am open for those questions as long as it can help figure out my problem.

**Doctor:** Okay, are you sexually active? If so; how many partners do you have? Do you use protections?

**Patient:** No doctor, I'm not sexually active.

## Test Your Knowledge

1. Why do you think the doctor asked about familial diseases?
2. Is it really necessary to ask questions about the patient's sexual life?

# Hacking Cough

**Doctor:** Where are you originally from?

**Patient:** I'm from the Philippines.

**Doctor:** Have you recently travelled? When is the last time you travelled outside of Los Angeles?

**Patient:** I went home to the Philippines 3-4 months ago.

**Doctor:** Do you have any pets at home? Were you exposed to any animals or birds recently?

**Patient:** No.

**Doctor:** Have you ever had PPD test? Like an injection on your arm and measure the round induration two days later?

**Patient:** Not yet doctor

**Doctor:** Okay thank you for answering my questions Miss Ellen. Even though there are some more possible sources of your coughs, like asthma or pneumonia. I'm still not sure exactly what it is. So I will run some tests such as blood works and chest X-rays. I think I can talk to you better about the diagnosis and the proper treatment when I get the result of those tests. In the meantime, I will give your medication to ease your cough. Do you have any questions?

**Patient:** I work at a day care center. Is this the reason why I have a cough?

**Doctor:** It might.

**Patient:** Do I need antibiotics to get better?

**Doctor:** Maybe. It depends on what you really have though. If it is pneumonia, they help. But for others, they do not.

**Patient:** Okay doctor, thank you so much for your time.

**Doctor:** Welcome. See you soon.

## Test Your Knowledge

- What would be your advice to this patient?
- Basing from the assessment above, what would be your differential diagnosis?