

Proposed Primary Care Approach to Assessing Adults with Chronic Dyspnea

First steps

To aid in diagnosis/referral/initial treatment

- ☐ **History**
- ☐ Consider duration of symptoms
- ☐ Review Red Flags (see below)
- ☐ Review medical history, including medications:
 - ☐ Smoking/Lung exposures
 - ☐ CV risk and history (CAD, BP)
 - ☐ Occupational/environmental issues or travel exposure?
 - ☐ PE risk: Virchow's triad
 - ☐ Sputum
 - ☐ Constitutional symptoms
- ☐ Perform **physical exam**

Red flags for acute issues

- Hemoptysis
- Smoker >45 years with new cough, cough change or coexisting voice disturbance
- Hoarseness
- Systemic symptoms, including fever, weight loss, night sweats, peripheral edema with weight gain
- Trouble swallowing while eating or drinking
- Vomiting
- Recurrent pneumonia
- Chest pain
- Calf pain

Investigations

May do multiple in sequence or as a group in primary care mostly, some requiring referral/hospital settings



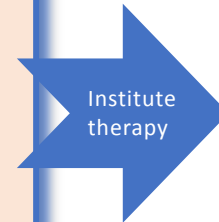
- ☐ **Oximetry**
 - ☐ **Peak flow in office**
 - ☐ **Spirometry**
 - ☐ **CXR**
 - ☐ **ECG**
 - ☐ **Echocardiogram**
 - ☐ **Routine labs: CBC, TSH, Bicarb**
 - ☐ **Special labs: proBNP, D-dimer, FENO**
 - ☐ **Tests for cardiac ischemia**
 - ☐ **Full PFTs**
 - ☐ **Walk test**
 - ☐ **Blood gases**
- Primary Care
- Primary or Secondary care

Potential causes

- Asthma
- COPD
- Cardiac ischemia
- Infection
- Interstitial lung disease
- PE/CTEPH
- Cardiomyopathy
- HFpEFr
- HFrEFr
- Pulmonary Hypertension

While patient waits to be seen by specialist

-follow up



- ☐ Consider other potential causes / additional investigations
- ☐ Consider possibility of >1 cause
- ☐ Assess adherence to treatment of potential underlying conditions
- ☐ Re-evaluate patient for (subtle) symptoms
- ☐ Continue to support your patient through their journey

Additional investigations (depending on access and situation)

- Further Cardiac workup (Holter monitoring, Stress Echo)
- HRCT
- Ventilation perfusion lung scan
- Bronchial provocation
- Bronchoscopy
- 24-hour oesophageal pH monitoring
- Coronary Angiogram left vs right sided
- Lung biopsy