# Family Medicine Preceptorship Discussion Cases

**Fatigue**

**Learning Objectives:**

* Define and differentiate causes of fatigue.
* Learn laboratory tests that are helpful in diagnosing fatigue-causing illnesses.
* Recommend appropriate management strategies for patients with physiologic or chronic fatigue symptoms.

# Suggested Readings:

Rosenthal TC, Majeroni BA, et al. Fatigue: An Overview. American Family Physician. 2008; 78 (10): 1173-79. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19035066>

Salmon P, Humphris GM, et al. Why Do Primary Care Physicians Propose Medical Care to Patients with Medically Unexplained Symptoms? A New Method of Sequence Analysis to Test Theories of Patient Pressure. Psychosomatic Medicine 2006; 68: 570-77. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16868266>

Rosenthal TC and Patel V, Fatigue (Chapter 43). In: Essentials of Family Medicine, 6th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins, 2012, 513-523.

**CASE 1:**

A 53 year-old male executive presents with concerns about feeling excessively tired for the past several weeks. He hasn’t been ill and denies neurologic, GI, or urinary changes. He generally sleeps poorly at night. He hasn’t taken any sleep medications, but finds that he falls asleep more easily if he has a couple of glasses of bourbon before bed.

Question 1: What is your differential diagnosis of his fatigue?

Question 2: What further history would help you determine the cause of his fatigue?

Question 3: Would you order any lab tests?

Question 4: What advice would you provide if no clear cause is identified on initial evaluation?

**Case 2:**

A 37 year-old healthy woman presents with fatigue for about two months. She feels like her mood is low and she has little energy or motivation to get her work done. She stopped exercising a few months ago after she sprained her ankle and never got back into the habit of her daily workouts. Her initial labs show no evidence of anemia, thyroid disease, or inflammation.

Question 1: What is her most likely diagnosis?

Question 2: How would you recommend treating her?

**Case 3:**

For the past year, you have been following a 42 year-old woman for fatigue that started relatively suddenly and seemed unprovoked. She complains of swollen glands in her neck that always feel a little tender. She feels weak, her muscles hurt, and she feels worse if she exercises. She reports difficulty concentrating and remembering things. Your history and physical and lab evaluation have not revealed an etiology, but her tonsils and anterior cervical lymph nodes are mildly enlarged. She underwent a trial of SSRI’s several months ago, but it was not helpful.

Question 1: What is her most likely diagnosis?

Question 2: What advice/treatment would you recommend?

Question 3: What is her prognosis?

CASE 4:

A 74 year-old man in an assisted living facility is brought to clinic by his daughter who is concerned about his constant complaints about his tiredness. He has hypertension controlled by lisinopril 10 mg daily, but is otherwise healthy. His wife passed away about a year ago. He hasn’t slept as well since her death, and his appetite is low, but he doesn’t think he is depressed. He has lost about 10 pounds in the past year.

Question 1: What diagnoses would you consider?

Question 2: How would you develop a comprehensive fatigue reduction program?