

# Mrs Brown's Palpitations

## Scene 1: Paramedic Chris

### 1.1: How can I help

<b>Paramedic Chris:</b> Hello, are you Mrs Brown?
<b>Alice:</b> [ <i>breathless</i> ] Yes, love.
<b>Paramedic Chris:</b> It's Alice isn't it? Is it okay if I call you Alice?
<b>Alice:</b> Yes, love.
<b>Paramedic Chris:</b> I'm Chris, I'm a paramedic. What can we do for you today?
<b>Alice:</b> It's my heart, it's going ten to the dozen, I can't catch my breath.
<b>Paramedic Chris:</b> Okay, how long have you felt like this?
<b>Alice:</b> About half an hour.
<b>Paramedic Chris:</b> Right, well let's give you a quick check-up and see if we can get to the bottom of this. Is that alright?
<b>Alice:</b> Yes, okay.

### 1.2: Physiological observations

<b>Paramedic Chris:</b> Right Alice, I'm going to check a few physiological measurements: so, your heart rate, temperature, the oxygen saturation of your blood, your respiration rate and your blood pressure.
<b>Alice:</b> Goodness, that's very thorough.
<b>Paramedic Chris:</b> Can I just check first, have you been sitting here for a while?
<b>Alice:</b> Yes, love.
<b>Paramedic Chris:</b> And have you had anything hot or cold to drink in the last half an hour?
<b>Alice:</b> No, I haven't had a drink for a couple of hours.
<b>Paramedic Chris:</b> Good stuff, right Alice, I'm going to start with your heart rate. I'll just feel the pulse in your wrist, okay?
<b>Alice:</b> Righto.

## SLIDE

Feeling a patient's pulse:

- an easy way to check heart rate and function
- heart rate is measured by placing two fingers on the inner wrist below the thumb and counting the beats for one minute

**Paramedic Chris:** Great! Now, I'm going to pop this on your finger. It's called a pulse oximeter and it checks your blood oxygen levels.

**Alice:** Okey dokey.

## SLIDE

A Pulse Oximeter shines light through the finger and measures changes in oxygen absorption levels.

**Paramedic Chris:** You're doing really well Alice. I'll just make a note of how well you're breathing.

## SLIDE

Respiration rate is measured by counting a patient's breaths per minute.

**Paramedic Chris:** So just one more thing, we need to get your blood pressure so I'm going to attach this cuff to your arm, it may feel a little tight. Is that alright?

**Alice:** Yes, that's fine.

## SLIDE

A Sphygmomanometer has an inflatable cuff that goes over the arm and attaches to a measuring device.

**Paramedic Chris:** Great, that's everything. Thank you.

**Alice:** Okay, thank you, love. What happens now?

### 1.3: Assessment

**Paramedic Chris:** Right then Alice, I don't think there's anything to worry about but what I'd like to do is whizz you down to the hospital. They've got much more accurate kit there.

I'd like them to have another look at you and see what they can do about getting your heart rate and breathing back to normal. Is that okay?

**Alice:** Well, I suppose so, whatever you think's best.  
You'll just have to give me a minute while I get my bag and phone.

#### 1.4: Ambulance to A&E

**Paramedic Chris:** Have you been in an ambulance before?

**Alice:** Not for a long time.

**Paramedic Chris:** Well you make yourself comfortable. Kate's driving today; the traffic's pretty heavy so I'll get her to put the lights on and give you a quick blast of the sirens. We'll be there in no time.

**Paramedic Chris:** Right Alice, we're at Accident and Emergency. Let's get you out of here.

### Scene 2: At the hospital with Nurse Nigel

#### 2.1: A&E Corridor - on the trolley

**Nurse Nigel:** Hi, Mrs Brown, I'm Nigel. I'm one of the nurses here and I'm going to be looking after you.

**Alice:** Hello, Nigel.

**Nurse Nigel:** I've checked you into our system and I'm going to take you to our consultation area. Hold tight, we'll be there in a sec.

**Alice:** Right love, don't go too fast!

**Nurse Nigel:** How're we doing? Are you comfortable? Have they looked after you?

**Alice:** Oh not so bad really. I'm feeling a bit better now.

**Nurse Nigel:** Aaw, that's good to hear.

#### 2.2: Monitoring Alice

**Nurse Nigel:** Right, first things first, we need to do an ECG on you to monitor your heart. Okay?

**Alice:** What's that?

**Nurse Nigel:** An ECG? It's an Electrocardiogram. All we need to do is put some sticky pads on your skin and it tells us what your heart is up to.

*[pause]*

I'm going to have to ask you to remove your top layer of clothes so I can stick the sensors on your chest. Is that okay Mrs Brown?

**Alice:** Well, I suppose it's for my own good. Yes, love.

**Nurse Nigel:** If you have any questions, just ask me. I know it's all a bit unusual but we want to get you back on your feet as soon as possible.

*[Pause]*

That's great, thanks.

**Alice:** That's okay.

**Nurse Nigel:** Later on we'll ask you to do some simple exercise tests as well, if you don't mind.

**Alice:** What for?

**Nurse Nigel:** Similar really, it's to see how your heart's functioning. It might be a bit tiring for you but we need to see how your heart manages with a small amount of stress. I'll ask you to walk on this treadmill for a bit.

**Alice:** With the pads and wires on?

**Nurse Nigel:** Yes, that way we can see on the machine how you respond while you're actually doing it. But we'll come to that in a bit.

## SLIDE

This is an Electrocardiogram (ECG) output.

An ECG machine measures the electrical activity of the heart to show doctors how the heart is working.

The graph has multiple waves to show the electrical activity of the heart.

ECGs can detect if the heart is beating too fast, too slow or if there is any heart damage.

**Nurse Nigel:** Thanks Mrs Brown, that's the ECG done now.

**Alice:** Okay, love. Thank you.

### 2.3: Observing Alice

**Alice:** Is there anything else?

**Nurse Nigel:** We need to repeat the checks the paramedic will have done with you before you came in. You know, your blood pressure and pulse and so on.

**Alice:** Oh right love. We'd best get on with it then.

**Nurse Nigel:** Okay, I need to check your blood pressure again. You know the drill, I'll put this cuff on your arm, it'll inflate and feel a little bit tight for a minute. Is that okay?

**Alice:** Yes, dear.

## SLIDE

### Image of blood pressure reading

Blood pressure:

- measured with a sphygmomanometer.
  - measured in millimeters of mercury - mmHg.
  - two readings: systolic and diastolic pressure.
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- Systolic is the pressure when the heart pushes blood out.
  - Diastolic is the pressure when the heart rests between beats.

**Nurse Nigel:** Your blood pressure is quite normal for someone of your age.

**Alice:** Oh, that's good news.

**Nurse Nigel:** Now, if you hold your finger out please, I'll put this on. It's a pulse oximeter and it checks how much oxygen is in your blood. While it's doing that, I'll measure your heart rate and respiration rate, so just try and relax for me.

## SLIDE

### Image of pulse oximeter

- A Pulse Oximeter shines light through the finger and measures changes in oxygen absorption levels.
- Heart rate is measured by feeling for a pulse and counting the beats per minute.
- Respiration rate is measured by counting a patient's breaths per minute.

**Nurse Nigel:** That will be all for today, Mrs Brown, thanks for being so calm and patient.

**Alice:** Thanks, love.

**Nurse Nigel:** Now I know it's a bit of a pain but I'm afraid we're going to have to keep you in for a couple of days so we can keep an eye on you.

**Alice:** Oh right, well I suppose...

**Nurse Nigel:** If you need us to contact anyone for you we can do that but for now I'll let you get dressed.

Stay here and I'll check up on you in a little while to see how you're doing.

If you need anything, press the buzzer, alright?

**Alice:** Thank you, dear. I've got my mobile, I'll give our Alan a call and let him know I'll be staying in for a few days.

### Scene 3: At home with Jordan:

#### 3.1: Jordan arrives

**Jordan:** Hiya Alice, y'alright?

**Alice:** Ooh, is it that time already?

**Jordan:** I've got your shopping. I'll just put it away for you. They didn't have any Lancashire cheese so I got you cheddar instead.

**Alice:** Righto. No probs.

**Jordan:** Right then, what do you fancy for tea?

**Alice:** There's a bit of gammon in the top of the fridge, that'd be nice love.

**Jordan:** With some chips?

**Alice:** No love, there's some spuds in there, I'll have mash please and some peas too.

**Jordan:** *[laughing]*

Your wish is my command.

**Alice:** Thanks, sweetheart. I'm starving.

**Jordan:** How's your day been?

**Alice:** Not bad, thanks. I spoke to our Alan earlier. He was asking about my new tablets.

**Jordan:** Oh right.

**Alice:** They're giving me the same ones his dad had.

**Jordan:** Did he have trouble with his heart too?

**Alice:** Yes, that's how he died in the end.

**Jordan:** Oh I'm sorry love, it must be a worry.

**Alice:** Yes, it is. But I think they've caught it earlier than they did with him, which is something.

**Jordan:** Yes.

*[pause]*

What tablets are they putting you on?

**Alice:** Digoxin. [*pronounced Di-jock-sin*]  
They help keep your heartbeat regular apparently.

**Jordan:** That's good.

### 3.2: Don't forget your medication

**Jordan:** Do you need to take one now?

**Alice:** I haven't got them yet. I've got to get them from the chemist.

**Jordan:** Do you want me to go for you?

**Alice:** No, it's alright love. I need to pop out for a few things anyway and a bit of exercise and fresh air will do me good.

**Jordan:** Okay then.

[*pause*]

Right I've finished here Alice, do you want me to bring your food through before I go?

**Alice:** No, it's okay love, I'll get it myself.

**Jordan:** Alright, I'll be getting off then, see you tomorrow.

## Scene 4: At the pharmacy with Charlie

### 4.1: How can I help you

**Alice:** Ooh hello, Charlie.

**Charlie:** Hello Mrs Brown, good to see you.

**Alice:** You too, love.

**Charlie:** So what can I help you with today?

### 4.2: New medication

**Alice:** I've got a new prescription.

**Charlie:** Thanks, Mrs Brown. I just need to check it against the other medication you're taking.

**Alice:** Right you are.

**Charlie:** Before I give them to you I need to tell you a few things you need to keep an eye out for.

**Alice:** Like what?

**Charlie:** Well for some people these tablets can make them feel a bit confused, dizzy or sick.

**Alice:** I see.

**Charlie:** And make sure you tell your doctor if you have any diarrhoea, skin rashes or problems with your vision.

**Alice:** Goodness...

**Charlie:** There's nothing to worry about, Mrs Brown, it doesn't happen to everyone. I just need to make you aware that it could happen because the Digoxin [*pronounced Di-jock-sin*] is new for you.

**Alice:** Okay, love.

**Charlie:** How have you been since you were discharged from the hospital?

**Alice:** Alright thank you

**Charlie:** And have you been given any other medicine?

**Alice:** No, nothing, just this one.

## SLIDE

A pharmacist's role includes:

- Checking if the patient's health has changed.
- Checking if they have other prescribed medicines
- Explaining possible side effects.
- Informing patients of new guidelines.

### 4.3: You've been prescribed Digoxin [*pronounced Di-jock-sin*]

**Charlie:** Well I think that's everything. Do you pay for your prescriptions?

**Alice:** No dear.

**Charlie:** Okay, here's your medication, Mrs Brown. See you next time.