

Diabetic Foot Ulcer Scenario

Instructor Resource

READ the following scenario:

Mr. Hernandez is 65 years old with a history of uncontrolled diabetes and high blood pressure. He has been hospitalized for an infected diabetic foot ulcer. The ulcer on his heel is quite deep but healing slowly. A certified wound nurse has been doing the dressing changes.

Today the wound care nurse has a student shadowing her. As the nurse is removing the dressing, Mr. Hernandez can see the disgusted look on the student's face. He asks, "What does it look like?" The student casually responds, "I haven't seen one like this before." Mr. Hernandez replies, "I don't know why the doctor just doesn't cut the whole foot off!"

REFLECT on the situation:

- What do you believe led to Mr. Hernandez's extreme response?

Possible responses: Validate that nonverbal communication is as impactful as verbal communication. It is important to remember that the patient is watching and listening to you. Mr. Hernandez could also be feeling hopeless about the progress of wound healing.

- How could the student have handled the situation more appropriately?

Possible responses: Be mindful of facial expressions and always act professional. If the student was experienced, they could have told Mr. Hernandez what the ulcer looked like. For example, they state "it looks like there is healthy tissue growth." If the student was unexperienced, they could refer the question to the wound care nurse. Since the student's nonverbal and verbal response could be the reason for Mr. Hernandez's response, they should apologize for their unprofessionalism. They should reassure Mr. Hernandez that the wound is healing and the infection is resolving.

- How would you respond to Mr. Hernandez's response?

SHARE your thoughts with a peer: