The Confusion Assessment Method (CAM) Diagnostic Algorithm

Consider the diagnosis of delirium if 1 and 2, AND either 3a or 3b are positive:

1. **Acute Onset and Fluctuating Course**
   - Is there evidence of an acute change in mental status from the patient’s baseline?
   - Did the (abnormal) behavior fluctuate during the day (tend to come and go, or increase and decrease in severity)?

2. **Inattention**
   - Did the patient have difficulty focusing attention (e.g. being easily distractible) or have difficulty keeping track of what was being said?

3a. **Disorganized Thinking**
   - Was the patient’s thinking disorganized or incoherent: such asrambling or irrelevant conversation, unclear or illogical flow of ideas, or unpredictable switching from subject to subject?

3b. **Altered Level of Consciousness**
   - Overall, how would you rate this patient’s level of consciousness? (alert [normal], vigilant [hyper-alert], lethargic [drowsy, easily aroused], stupor [difficult to arouse], or coma [un-arousable]). *Positive for any answer other than “alert”.*

Sensitivity: 94%-100%; Specificity: 90%-95%
Ref: Inouye, SK et al Annals Int Med 1990;113:941-48
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