Illness: feeling under the weather

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
ADVANCED | C1

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each advanced term with its definition.

1 idiopathic ____	**a** of unknown cause
2 differential diagnosis ____	**b** the process of distinguishing between conditions with similar symptoms
3 nosocomial infection ____	**c** an infection acquired in a hospital setting
4 prodrome ____	**d** early symptoms signalling the onset of a disease, before full illness develops
5 sequela ____	**e** a condition resulting from a prior disease or injury
6 morbidity ____	**f** the incidence or prevalence of a disease within a population
7 etiology ____	**g** the study or cause of a disease's origin
8 syndrome ____	**h** a group of symptoms that consistently occur together, characterising a condition
9 refractory ____	**i** resistant to treatment
10 subclinical ____	**j** present but not yet producing detectable symptoms

2 Choose the most precise term for each context.

1 A condition of unknown cause is idiopathic / clearly caused.

2 Distinguishing between conditions with similar symptoms is differential diagnosis / a single test.

3 An infection acquired in a hospital is nosocomial infection / a community-acquired illness.

4 Early symptoms signalling onset of disease are a prodrome / full-blown illness.

5 A condition resulting from a prior illness is a sequela / the original diagnosis.

6 The incidence of disease within a population is morbidity / mortality alone.

7 The study of a disease's cause is etiology / treatment protocol.

8 Resistant to treatment is refractory / responsive.

3 Match the verbs with the noun phrases to form academic collocations.

1 establish ____	**a** a prodrome

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2 mitigate ____	**b** a differential diagnosis
3 present with ____	**c** disease etiology
4 investigate ____	**d** a refractory condition
5 manage ____	**e** morbidity to a specific cause
6 attribute ____	**f** nosocomial risk
7 monitor ____	**g** subclinical progression
8 rule out ____	**h** an alternative diagnosis

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4 Complete the analysis with terms from the box.

differential diagnosis | etiology | idiopathic | morbidity | nosocomial infection | prodrome | refractory | sequela | subclinical | syndrome

Clinicians facing an ambiguous presentation typically begin by establishing a 1 _____, systematically ruling out conditions with overlapping symptoms before reaching a confident diagnosis. Some conditions remain 2 _____, with no identifiable cause despite thorough investigation, complicating both explanation and treatment planning. Careful clinicians attend to a 3 _____, subtle early symptoms that can signal an oncoming illness well before its full presentation. Hospitals invest considerable resources preventing 4 _____, since infections acquired during treatment carry particular risk for already vulnerable patients. Long-term outcomes sometimes include a 5 _____, a lasting consequence of the original illness persisting after the acute phase resolves. Population-level 6 _____ data helps researchers understand disease burden, while ongoing research into 7 _____ continues to clarify why certain conditions develop in the first place. A recognised 8 _____, a consistent cluster of symptoms occurring together, can guide diagnosis even before underlying mechanisms are fully understood. Some infections remain 9 _____, undetected until screening reveals their presence, while others prove stubbornly 10 _____, resisting standard treatment protocols entirely.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Diagnosis under uncertainty

Clinical diagnosis frequently proceeds under considerable uncertainty, particularly for conditions presenting with a vague prodrome or symptoms overlapping substantially with more common illnesses. Experienced clinicians rely heavily on differential diagnosis, systematically weighing the probability of competing explanations against available evidence, rather than committing prematurely to a single diagnosis based on incomplete information. This process becomes particularly challenging for idiopathic conditions, where etiology remains genuinely unclear even after extensive investigation, forcing clinicians to manage symptoms without fully understanding underlying causes. Diagnostic uncertainty of this kind, researchers note, is often poorly communicated to patients, who may reasonably expect greater medical certainty than the evidence genuinely supports.

1 What does clinical diagnosis frequently proceed under, according to the text? _____

2 What do conditions particularly presenting with uncertainty share? _____

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3 What do experienced clinicians rely heavily on? _____

4 What does this avoid doing prematurely? _____

5 What becomes particularly challenging for idiopathic conditions? _____

6 What do researchers note is often poorly communicated to patients? _____

6 Replace the words in bold with a precise term or collocation.

1 The doctors worked to distinguish between conditions with similar symptoms. _____

2 The condition had no identifiable cause despite thorough investigation. _____

3 She noticed subtle early symptoms before the full illness developed. _____

4 The infection was acquired during her hospital stay. _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 160-190 word critical commentary on how diagnostic uncertainty affects clinical practice and patient communication, distinguishing observation from inference.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Include four academic collocations. [ ] Maintain a precise, balanced register.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Advanced terms

1 a 2 b 3 c 4 d 5 e 6 f 7 g 8 h 9 i 10 j

2 Precise terms

1 idiopathic 2 differential diagnosis 3 nosocomial infection 4 a prodrome 5 a sequela 6 morbidity 7 etiology 8 refractory

3 Academic collocations

1 b establish a differential diagnosis 2 f mitigate nosocomial risk 3 a present with a prodrome 4 c investigate disease etiology 5 d manage a refractory condition 6 e attribute morbidity to a specific cause 7 g monitor subclinical progression 8 h rule out an alternative diagnosis

4 Analysis

1 differential diagnosis 2 idiopathic 3 prodrome 4 nosocomial infection 5 sequela
6 morbidity 7 etiology 8 syndrome 9 subclinical 10 refractory

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Considerable uncertainty.
2 A vague prodrome or symptoms overlapping substantially with more common illnesses.
3 Differential diagnosis.
4 Committing prematurely to a single diagnosis based on incomplete information.
5 Etiology, which remains genuinely unclear even after extensive investigation.
6 Diagnostic uncertainty.

6 Precise terms and collocations

1 differential diagnosis 2 idiopathic 3 a prodrome 4 a nosocomial infection

Over to you

Answers will vary. Look for conceptual precision, evidence-aware reasoning and balanced evaluation.