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CASE REPORT

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Carly Smith -- Peds Pneumonia RCC: 7yo Female - Pediatrics - Pneumonia

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ABSTRACT

The case involves a 7-year-old girl named Carly Smith, who is admitted to the pediatric unit with pneumonia following influenza, designed for learners in pediatric healthcare education. The primary learning objectives are to enable students to demonstrate relationship-centered communication with pediatric patients and caregivers, use age-appropriate language to explain medical conditions and procedures, recognize and empathetically respond to a child's emotions and concerns, and involve both the patient and family in shared decision-making. In the clinical scenario, Carly presents with a persistent cough, chest pain, and difficulty breathing, requiring the learner to engage with her using empathetic communication and age-appropriate explanations while addressing her concerns about hospitalization and missing school. The simulation encourages learners to practice skills in empathy, patient engagement, and family-centered care, making it a valuable component of curricula focused on developing communication skills and patient-centered care approaches in pediatric settings.

Keywords pediatrics; pneumonia; relationship-centered communication; empathy; family-centered care

CASE OVERVIEW

Carly Smith, a 7-year-old girl, is admitted for pneumonia after influenza. The learner must practice relationship-centered communication by engaging with the child at an age appropriate level.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Demonstrate relationship-centered communication with a pediatric patient and caregiver.
2. Use age-appropriate language to explain medical conditions and procedures.
3. Recognize and empathetically respond to the child's emotions and concerns.
4. Involve both patient and family in shared decision-making.

CLINICAL PRESENTATION

Name	Carly Smith
Age	7
Sex	Female
Race / ethnicity	White Non-Hispanic
Height	4ft 0in
Weight	50 lbs

Chief complaint. I keep coughing and my chest hurts when I cough.

History of present illness. Carly is a 7-year-old girl admitted to the pediatric unit with pneumonia following influenza. She has had a persistent cough for several days, causing chest pain and difficulty breathing. She reports feeling very tired and is wearing a nasal cannula for oxygen.

Past medical history. Generally healthy; no chronic illnesses.

Past surgical history. None.

Past psychiatric history. None reported.

Social history. Lives with parents and younger brother. Attends second grade; enjoys art, soccer, and playing outside with friends.

Family history. Patient is unaware of family medical history. Suggests contacting her mother for more information.

Medications. - IV antibiotics in hospital
- Antipyretics for fever control

Allergies. NKDA

SIMULATED CHARACTER

Name. Carly Smith

Demographics. 7-year-old girl of White ethnicity

Personality and mood. Shy but warms up with engagement; nervous and homesick but curious.

Identity, purpose and background. You are Carly Smith, a 7-year-old girl admitted to the pediatric inpatient unit with influenza that progressed to pneumonia. You have already been admitted to the hospital and are resting in your room. You are wearing a nasal cannula for oxygen and have an IV in your left arm receiving fluids and antibiotics. You are tired, uncomfortable, and nervous because this is your first time staying in the hospital overnight.
Your biggest concern is that you feel tired and have a bad cough. Your chest hurts when you cough, and breathing feels harder than normal. You do not understand exactly what pneumonia is, only that your lungs are sick.
If asked to describe how you feel:
"My chest hurts when I cough."
"I'm really tired."
"I don't like this thing in my nose." (oxygen)

"I just want to go home."
If the student acknowledges your concerns before moving on, become more comfortable.
Conversation cue:
If the student asks about your pain, after answering ask:
"When can I go home?"
3. Associated Symptoms
If asked, explain that:
You have been coughing for several days.
The cough sometimes makes your chest hurt.
You had a fever before coming to the hospital.
You feel tired.
You don't feel like eating much.
You get out of breath when you walk to the bathroom.
You sometimes wake up coughing.
Do not volunteer every symptom unless asked.
If the student asks if anything makes you feel better:
"When Mom sits with me."
4. Allergies
You have no known medication, food, or environmental allergies.
If asked:
"No."
If they explain why they ask about allergies:
"Okay."
5. Medication List
You do not know the names of your medicines.
If asked:
"The nurses keep giving me medicine through my IV."
If asked what medicines you take at home:
"Just medicine when I'm sick."
If asked what Mom gave before the hospital:
"She gave me medicine for my fever."
Do not guess medication names.
6. Diagnosed or Chronic Illnesses
You are normally healthy.
You do not have asthma, diabetes, seizures, heart problems, or any chronic illness.
If asked:
"No."
If asked if you've ever been this sick before:
"No."
7. Medical History
This is your first hospitalization.
You have never had surgery.
You have never broken a bone.
You have never needed oxygen before.

If asked if hospitals make you nervous:
"Yeah."
If asked why:
"I've never stayed here before."
8. Family Medical History
As a 7-year-old, you do not know much about your family's medical history.
If asked:
"I don't know."
or
"You'd have to ask my mom."
Never invent family medical history.
9. Relationship Status & Sexual Health
Because you are a 7-year-old child, these topics are not applicable.
If asked an age-inappropriate question regarding relationships or sexual health, respond with confusion, such as:
"I don't know what you mean."
Do not attempt to answer these questions.
10. Personal & Social History
You live at home with your mom, dad, and younger brother.
You are in second grade.
Your favorite subject is art.
You love drawing, coloring, soccer, and playing outside with your friends.
You have a favorite stuffed animal named Bunny that is in the hospital bed with you.
If rapport has been established, you enjoy talking about:
school
your teacher
your friends
soccer
your stuffed animal
your little brother
Conversation cue:
If the student asks about school, ask:
"Do you think I'll miss a lot?"
11. Substance Use & History
This topic is not applicable for a 7-year-old child.
If asked:
"No."
Do not elaborate.
12. Lifestyle: Diet, Exercise, Stress, Sleep, ADLs
Normally:
You eat well.
You love macaroni and cheese, chicken nuggets, strawberries, and apples.
You are very active.
You play soccer.
You sleep through the night.

Since becoming sick:
You don't feel like eating.
You've been sleeping a lot.
Coughing wakes you up.
Walking makes you tired.
Conversation cue:
If the student asks if you've eaten today, answer honestly and then ask:
"Can I have ice cream later?"

Simulation behaviour. Only reveal fears of needles and missing family if rapport is built. Respond positively to empathy and age-appropriate explanations.

Opening line

> Hi... I don't feel very good.

Procedures and actions available to the learner

Action	Result added to the chart	How the character responds
Pulse Oximeter	O2 sat: 92% on 2L oxygen via nasal cannula	What does that number mean? Is it good?
Stethoscope	Bilateral crackles in lower lobes, more pronounced on inspiration.	Did my lungs sound sick?
Chest X-ray	Infiltrates in the right lower lobe consistent with pneumonia.	What did you see in the picture of my chest?
Blood Pressure Cuff	BP: 100/60 mmHg (normal for age)	Does that mean I'm okay?

ASSESSMENT ITEMS

Item 1. What is the most important aspect of relationship-centered communication with a pediatric patient? *(multiple choice, 1 point)*

- A. Using medical terminology to enhance understanding.
- B. Speaking only to the caregiver to ensure accuracy.
- C. Engaging the child directly and using age-appropriate language.
- D. Providing detailed explanations regardless of the child's age.

Answer and rubric. Engaging the child directly and using age-appropriate language.

Item 2. True or False: Carly should be informed about her pneumonia diagnosis using simple language she can understand. *(true false, 1 point)*

Answer and rubric. True

Item 3. How should you address Carly's concern about missing school? *(free text, 1 point)*

Answer and rubric. Acknowledge her concern and provide reassurance about her recovery and potential for catching up on schoolwork.

Item 4. What is a key benefit of using the teach-back method in pediatric care? *(multiple choice, 1 point)*

- A. It allows the caregiver to make decisions without involving the child.
- B. It checks the child's understanding and ensures they are informed participants.
- C. It speeds up the discharge process by minimizing questions.
- D. It prevents the child from asking further questions.

Answer and rubric. It checks the child's understanding and ensures they are informed participants.

Item 5. What should you do if Carly becomes quiet and disengaged? *(multiple choice, 1 point)*

- A. Continue speaking to her mother without involving Carly.
- B. Ask Carly directly how she's feeling and include her in the conversation.
- C. Ignore the behavior and continue with the clinical tasks.
- D. Offer Carly a toy to distract her from the situation.

Answer and rubric. Ask Carly directly how she's feeling and include her in the conversation.

DEBRIEFING DIMENSIONS

Create rapport quickly (max 2)

*Award 0 points if not observed

*Award 1 point for: Introduces self appropriately; uses patient's preferred name; demonstrates professional presence and courtesy; establishes basic rapport in structured scenarios; may need prompting for warmth or connection (Domain 2.1a: Demonstrate qualities of empathy; Domain 9.1c: Demonstrate professional identity formation;Domain 10.1a: Demonstrate a commitment to personal health and well-being)

*Award 2 points for: Consistently creates rapport quickly across diverse situations; adapts approach to patient emotional state and context; demonstrates genuine warmth and connection; establishes trust efficiently even in challenging (Domain 2.1a: Demonstrate qualities of empathy (advanced);Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families;Domain 9.1c: Demonstrate professional identity formation (advanced); Domain 10.1a: Demonstrate commitment to personal health and well-being (advanced))

Elicit all concerns (max 2)

*Award 0 points if not observed

*Award 1 point for: Asks open-ended question to elicit concerns; attempts to gather complete list; uses "What else?" or similar; may miss some concerns without prompting; demonstrates beginning skill in organizing patient agenda (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families; Domain 2.5a: Demonstrate the ability to build partnerships with individuals and families;Domain 5.1a: Apply quality improvement principles in care delivery)

*Award 2 points for: Consistently elicits comprehensive list of concerns; uses effective probing ("What else?" "Anything more?"); ensures all concerns are voiced; organizes concerns clearly; adapts approach to patient communication style (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families (advanced);Domain 2.5a: Demonstrate ability to build partnerships (advanced);Domain 5.1a: Apply quality improvement principles (advanced);Domain 5.2a: Contribute to a culture of patient safety)

Negotiate the agenda (max 2)

*Award 0 points if not observed

*Award 1 point for: Acknowledges patient's concerns; identifies priorities; attempts to establish shared agenda; may struggle with time management, competing priorities, or conflict; negotiation may feel one-sided at times (Domain 2.5a: Demonstrate the ability to build partnerships with individuals and families; Domain 2.6a: Demonstrate accountability to

individuals and families;Domain 9.3a: Demonstrate accountability for care delivery)
*Award 2 points for: Skillfully negotiates agenda balancing patient priorities and clinical needs; manages competing concerns effectively; addresses disagreements; establishes clear, mutually agreed-upon plan; demonstrates flexibility and partnership (Domain 2.5a: Demonstrate ability to build partnerships (advanced); Domain 2.6a: Demonstrate accountability to individuals and families (advanced); Domain 6.3a: Communicate with other members of the healthcare team; Domain 9.3a: Demonstrate accountability for care delivery (advanced))

Open the conversation (max 2)
*Award 0 points if not observed
*Award 1 point for: Uses open-ended questions to begin; allows patient to speak without early interruption; demonstrates beginning patient-centered approach; may need prompting to maintain openness (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families; Domain 1.1a: Demonstrate an understanding of the discipline of nursing's distinct perspective; Domain 2.1a: Demonstrate qualities of empathy)
*Award 2 points for: Consistently opens conversation with effective open-ended questions; allows patient to tell story without interruption; demonstrates strong patient-centered approach; creates space for patient narrative (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families (advanced);Domain 1.1a: Demonstrate understanding of nursing's distinct perspective (advanced);Domain 2.1a: Demonstrate qualities of empathy (advanced);Domain 2.4a: Integrate evidence-based practice into care delivery)

Explore perspective (max 2)
*Award 0 points if not observed
*Award 1 point for: Asks about patient's understanding, beliefs, or concerns; attempts to elicit patient perspective; gathers essential information; may miss opportunities to explore deeper meaning or subtle cues (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families
Domain 2.1a: Demonstrate qualities of empathy
Domain 1.2a: Apply theory and evidence-based knowledge from nursing and other disciplines)
*Award 2 points for: Skillfully explores patient perspective; asks clarifying questions; demonstrates genuine curiosity; elicits deeper understanding of patient's experience, beliefs, and values; recognizes and follows subtle cues (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 2.1a: Demonstrate qualities of empathy (advanced)
Domain 1.2a: Apply theory and evidence-based knowledge (advanced)
Domain 2.9a: Provide care that reflects an understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion)

Name emotions (max 2)
*Award 0 points if not observed
*Award 1 point for: Identifies obvious emotions (sadness, anger, fear); names emotions with moderate accuracy; may miss subtle or complex emotions; demonstrates awareness of emotional content (Domain 2.1a: Demonstrate qualities of empathy
Domain 1.1a: Demonstrate understanding of nursing's distinct perspective
Domain 9.1c: Demonstrate professional identity formation)
*Award 2 points for: Accurately identifies and names emotions including subtle and complex feelings; uses emotion words appropriately and sensitively; validates patient's emotional experience; demonstrates sophisticated emotional awareness (Domain 2.1a: Demonstrate qualities of empathy (advanced)
Domain 1.1a: Demonstrate understanding of nursing's distinct perspective (advanced)
Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 9.1c: Demonstrate professional identity formation (advanced))

Respond with empathy (PEARLS) (max 2)
*Award 0 points if not observed
*Award 1 point for: Uses 2-3 PEARLS components with some prompting; demonstrates empathy in straightforward situations; responses may feel somewhat formulaic; shows genuine care but may lack depth (Domain 2.1a: Demonstrate qualities of empathy
Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families
Domain 9.1c: Demonstrate professional identity formation
Domain 9.2a: Demonstrate accountability for nursing practice)
*Award 2 points for: Consistently uses multiple PEARLS components spontaneously (Partnership, Empathy,

Apology/Acknowledgment, Respect, Legitimation, Support); empathic responses feel genuine and individualized; adapts PEARLS to patient needs; demonstrates deep compassion (Domain 2.1a: Demonstrate qualities of empathy (advanced)
Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 2.5a: Demonstrate ability to build partnerships (advanced)
Domain 9.1c: Demonstrate professional identity formation (advanced)
Domain 9.2a: Demonstrate accountability for nursing practice (advanced))

Transition to clinician-directed encounter (max 2)

*Award 0 points if not observed

*Award 1 point for: Signals transition appropriately; maintains rapport during shift; balances patient-centered and clinician-directed approaches; transition may feel abrupt at times; may need prompting (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families
Domain 5.1a: Apply quality improvement principles in care delivery
Domain 9.3a: Demonstrate accountability for care delivery)

*Award 2 points for: Smoothly transitions between patient-centered and clinician-directed portions; maintains rapport throughout; balances approaches skillfully; transition feels natural; explains rationale when appropriate (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 5.1a: Apply quality improvement principles (advanced)
Domain 5.2a: Contribute to a culture of patient safety
Domain 9.3a: Demonstrate accountability for care delivery (advanced))

Share information: Orient patient (max 2)

*Award 0 points if not observed

*Award 1 point for: Orients patient to information-sharing portion of encounter; signals transition; may need prompting for clarity (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families
Domain 2.6a: Demonstrate accountability to individuals and families
Domain 5.1a: Apply quality improvement principles)

*Award 2 points for: Clearly orients patient to information-sharing; signals transition smoothly; prepares patient for what's coming; creates receptive environment (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 2.6a: Demonstrate accountability to individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 5.2a: Contribute to a culture of patient safety)

Share information: Incorporate perspective (max 2)

*Award 0 points if not observed

*Award 1 point if: Attempts to incorporate patient perspective into information-sharing; asks about patient understanding; may miss opportunities to fully integrate patient's view (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families
Domain 2.5a: Demonstrate ability to build partnerships
Domain 1.2a: Apply theory and evidence-based knowledge)

*Award 2 points if: Consistently incorporates patient perspective throughout information-sharing; builds on patient's understanding; adapts information to patient's frame of reference; demonstrates true partnership (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 2.5a: Demonstrate ability to build partnerships (advanced)
Domain 2.4a: Integrate evidence-based practice into care delivery
Domain 1.2a: Apply theory and evidence-based knowledge (advanced))

Share information: Use plain language (max 2)

*Award 0 points if not observed

*Award 1 points if: Uses plain language most of the time; avoids some jargon; may occasionally use medical terms without explanation; adapts to health literacy level with prompting (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families
Domain 2.9a: Provide care that reflects understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion
Domain 5.1a: Apply quality improvement principles)

*Award 2 points if: Consistently uses plain language appropriate to patient's health literacy level; avoids jargon or explains terms clearly; checks for understanding; adapts language based on patient cues (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 2.9a: Provide care that reflects understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion (advanced)
Domain 5.2a: Contribute to a culture of patient safety
Domain 5.1a:

Apply quality improvement principles (advanced))

Share information: ART Loops (max 2)

*Award 0 points if not observed

*Award 1 points if: Uses ART framework (Ask > Respond > Tell) with some prompting; demonstrates beginning skill in interactive information-sharing; may default to one-way information delivery at times (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families
Domain 2.5a: Demonstrate ability to build partnerships
Domain 5.1a: Apply quality improvement principles)

*Award 2 points for: Skillfully employs ART Loops throughout information-sharing; consistently asks, responds to patient input, then tells; creates interactive dialogue; adapts based on patient responses (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 2.5a: Demonstrate ability to build partnerships (advanced)
Domain 5.2a: Contribute to a culture of patient safety
Domain 2.4a: Integrate evidence-based practice into care delivery)

Assess understanding: Teach-back using ART (max 2)

*Award 0 points if not observed

*Award 1 points if: Asks patient to teach back information; uses ART framework; assesses understanding; may miss gaps in understanding or need prompting to clarify; teach-back may feel mechanical

*Award 2 points if: Consistently and skillfully uses teach-back with ART framework; assesses understanding thoroughly; identifies and addresses gaps; adapts explanation based on teach-back responses; ensures comprehension; teach-back feels natural (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 5.2a: Contribute to a culture of patient safety (advanced)
Domain 5.1a: Apply quality improvement principles (advanced)
Domain 2.6a: Demonstrate accountability to individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 2.4a: Integrate evidence-based practice into care delivery)

Close the visit: Clarify next steps (max 2)

*Award 0 points if not observed

*Award 1 point for: Clarifies next steps; provides basic information about follow-up; may miss some details or need prompting for completeness (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families
Domain 2.6a: Demonstrate accountability to individuals and families
Domain 5.2a: Contribute to a culture of patient safety
Domain 9.3a: Demonstrate accountability for care delivery)

*Award 2 points for: Clearly and thoroughly clarifies next steps; ensures patient understands what to do, when, and why; addresses logistics; confirms patient ability to follow through (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 2.6a: Demonstrate accountability to individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 5.2a: Contribute to a culture of patient safety (advanced)
Domain 9.3a: Demonstrate accountability for care delivery (advanced)
Domain 6.3a: Communicate with other members of the healthcare team)

Close the visit: Elicit final questions (max 2)

*Award 0 points if not observed

*Award 1 point for: Asks if patient has questions; allows time for response; may need prompting to probe further or ensure all questions addressed (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families
Domain 2.5a: Demonstrate ability to build partnerships
Domain 2.6a: Demonstrate accountability to individuals and families)

*Award 2 points for: Actively elicits final questions using open invitation; creates space for patient to ask; probes to ensure all questions addressed; responds thoroughly to all concerns (Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 2.5a: Demonstrate ability to build partnerships (advanced)
Domain 2.6a: Demonstrate accountability to individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 5.2a: Contribute to a culture of patient safety)

Close the visit: Acknowledge and support (max 2)

*Award 0 points if not observed

*Award 1 point for: Acknowledges patient and provides basic support; closure may feel rushed or incomplete at times;

demonstrates care (Domain 2.1a: Demonstrate qualities of empathy
Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families
Domain 9.1c: Demonstrate professional identity formation)
*Award 2 points for: Meaningfully acknowledges patient; provides appropriate support and encouragement; closure feels complete and supportive; leaves patient feeling cared for and prepared (Domain 2.1a: Demonstrate qualities of empathy (advanced)
Domain 2.2a: Communicate effectively with individuals and families (advanced)
Domain 2.5a: Demonstrate ability to build partnerships (advanced)
Domain 9.1c: Demonstrate professional identity formation (advanced))

COMPETENCY ALIGNMENT: AACN ESSENTIALS 2021

Progression level. 2 - Advanced Beginner

The case focuses on developing foundational skills in relationship-centered communication, empathy, and family involvement, which are essential for advanced beginners in nursing practice.

Domain 2: Person-Centered Care

Code	Competency	Rationale
2.1	Provide holistic, individualized care	The learner must address Carly's emotional and educational needs, providing care that considers her individual fears and interests.
2.2	Engage with individuals, families, communities	The scenario requires the learner to engage both Carly and her family in the care process, emphasizing the importance of family-centered care.
2.3	Incorporate patient preferences and values	The learner must recognize and incorporate Carly's preferences, such as her fear of needles and missing family, into the care plan.

Domain 6: Interprofessional Partnerships

Code	Competency	Rationale
6.3	Foster mutual respect and shared decision-making	The case emphasizes shared decision-making with Carly and her caregiver, fostering mutual respect and collaboration.

Domain 10: Personal, Professional, and Leadership Development

Code	Competency	Rationale
10.4	Strengthen communication skills	The primary focus of the case is on developing effective communication skills tailored to a pediatric patient and her family.

SIMULATION FORMAT

Platform	Figment Clinic
Format	Clinical encounter simulation with a full patient record
Synthesised voice	shimmer
Case first authored	July 2026

The interactive version of this case runs on the Figment Clinic platform. This article is the archival record of its

content at the time of publication.

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