The Confusion Assessment Method (CAM) diagnostic algorithm (short version)¹

Patient’s name: ________________________________

Date of birth: ____ / ____ / ____

Hospital number: __________________

Feature 1  Acute onset and fluctuating course
This feature is usually obtained from a family member or nurse and is shown by positive responses to the following questions:
1. Is there evidence of an acute change in mental status from the patient’s baseline?
2. Did the (abnormal) behaviour fluctuate during the day, that is, tend to come and go, or increase or decrease in severity?

Feature 2  Inattention
This feature is usually obtained by interacting with the patient, but may also be reported by family members or staff and is shown by a positive response to the following question:
3. Did the patient have difficulty focusing attention, for example being easily distractible or having difficulty keeping track of what was being said?

Feature 3  Disorganised thinking
This feature is usually obtained by interacting with the patient, but may also be reported by family members or staff and is shown by a positive response to the following question:
4. ‘Was the patient’s thinking disorganised or incoherent, such as rambling or irrelevant conversation, unclear or illogical flow of ideas, or unpredictable switching from subject to subject?’

Feature 4  Altered level of consciousness
This feature is obtained by observing the patient and is shown by any answer other than ‘alert’ to the following question:
5. Overall, how would you rate this patient’s level of consciousness?
   - Alert (normal)
   - Vigilant (hyperalert)
   - Lethargic (drowsy, easily aroused)
   - Stupor (difficult to arouse)
   - Coma (unarousable)

Scoring the test (please tick as appropriate)

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<th>Feature</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
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Reference

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