CASE STUDY #3: DIABETIC HYPOGLYCEMIA

S., a 28-year-old, arrived in the emergency room semiconscious. Her friends explained they had all been drinking since early afternoon and that 30 minutes ago S. had suddenly become very irritable and angry, just before she “passed out”. One of her friends knew she was a diabetic and though she might need some medical attention. She wore no diabetic identification. S. has been on 22U NPH insulin daily for the last two years.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Briefly explain the pathophysiology of hypoglycemia.

2. What are the clinical manifestation of hypoglycemia? Which did her friends observe?

3. What were the precipitating factors in this case?

4. What effect does alcohol have on the blood glucose?

5. What educational needs must be met for S. prior to discharge?

6. Patients with complications of diabetes frequently become depressed and take a “what’s the use” attitude. Describe some of the typical behaviors the nurse might observe in such a situation.