

# Altered Mental Status- May 2017

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Altered Mental Status (AMS):

- Often utilized but is a nonspecific condition which is associated with a low severity of illness
- Usually a symptom of another diagnosis
- Clarify the possible cause of the altered mental status (i.e. dementia, delirium, psychosis, or encephalopathy)

To consider --

Does AMS “rise to the occasion” of:

Delirium:

- Sudden and reversible confusion and may only last a few hours or as long as a few weeks
- Possible causes: Drugs and alcohol, dementia, infections
- Clarify the possible cause of delirium

OR if AMS “rises to the occasion” of:

Encephalopathy<sup>1</sup>

- Definition: Global cerebral dysfunction in absence of structural brain disease.
- Etiology of encephalopathy needs to be documented, i.e.:
  - Alcoholic
  - Link by stating “Due to” other disease process (i.e. neoplasm, drugs, infectious process)
  - Hepatic
  - Hypertensive
  - Metabolic
  - Septic
  - Toxic

1. Pinson, R. (March 2017). Altered Mental Status. Retrieved from <https://acphospitalist.org/archives/2017/03/coding-altered-mental-status-part-2.htm>