

**SETTING** Suburban Clinic

**PATIENT** You are an elderly patient who had shingles on your face a few months ago, above your right eye. It has resolved but now you have a burning pain that is quite severe. When you touch your skin, you experience spasm.

- TASK**
- Find out what is causing this pain. Ask if it is related to the shingles.
  - Find out what the doctor can do for it.
  - Express surprise that you are being prescribed standard painkillers. Will they work?
  - Ask if you will need surgery to remove the painful skin.
  - You dislike taking drugs so ask if there are any non-pharmacological treatments available.

**SETTING** Suburban Clinic

**DOCTOR** An elderly patient presented several months ago with herpes zoster (shingles) on the right temporal region of the face. He/she is now complaining of symptoms of postherpetic neuralgia (the nerve pain that often lingers after a shingles rash goes away).

- TASK**
- Explain the cause of the symptoms to the patient (pain in the nerves).
  - Recommend analgesia as a first line of treatment (paracetamol or codeine). Give capsaicin cream for topical application and explain the sensation it might cause. (e.g., a slight stinging sensation or coughing and sneezing, etc.).
  - Mention anticonvulsant drugs (gabapentin or pregabalin) may be used if necessary.
  - Answer questions about excision of the affected area and reassure him/her that surgery is not indicated.
  - Explain that non-pharmacological approaches may help (e.g., relaxation, meditation, psychologist, chronic pain clinic, etc.).