

# Sepsis

## Introduction

Sepsis is a leading cause of avoidable death in the UK killing more people than breast, bowel and prostate cancer combined<sup>1</sup>. Publicity campaigns have raised the population's awareness and anxiety regarding possible sepsis symptoms, but diagnosis is challenging early in the course of the illness as symptoms are often non-specific. Identifying early sepsis in primary care without overdiagnosis is a challenge for primary care clinicians <sup>2,3</sup>.

Guidelines for secondary care (Sepsis Six) are widely used, but until recently, there has been a lack of guidance on a standardised approach to assessing and managing the unwell patient with suspected sepsis in primary care.

This module will look at the following issues which were identified by a discussion group of PBSGL members as being major areas of uncertainty:

- presentation of sepsis in different age groups and co-morbidities
- the role of primary care triage systems in facilitating prompt diagnosis and treatment in suspected sepsis
- tools for assessing the septic patient's risk of deterioration in primary care
- issues around the immediate measures that should be instituted for septic patients while waiting for ambulance transfer to hospital
- effective 'handover' for onward referral of the septic patient.

Sepsis presenting in children is also addressed in the PBSGL module 'Life threatening Problems in Children'.