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Diagnostic Dilemma

Answers:

1) D

ECG reveals multifocal atrial tachycardia. Multifocal atrial tachycardia is due to increased automaticity. It is diagnosed with the following criteria: heart rate >100 bpm and 3 different morphology of P waves. Varying PP, PR and RR intervals are also noted. Treatment includes treating underlying cause of hypoxia.

2) B

Sine wave pattern suggestive of hyperkalemia is seen on EKG. Sine wave pattern indicates potassium level > 8 meq/dl. Although options A and C are reasonable, the first step would be to administer calcium gluconate to stabilize membrane potential followed by emergent hemodialysis.

3) B

This EKG shows atrial fibrillation with junctional or AV nodal escape rhythm. Digitalis toxicity should be suspected whenever a patient with atrial fibrillation has regular bradycardia. Digitalis increases the refractoriness of AV node and in digitalis toxicity can cause a complete heart (AV nodal) block and AV nodal escape rhythm.

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Venue: Hyatt Regency New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana