

A reflection on structured Arterial Blood Gas (ABG) interpretation for physiotherapy practice

DATE

9 June 2026

PROVIDER

NHS Trust

STUDY TIME

1.5h

REFLECTIVE STRUCTURE

Rolfe

LEARNING ACTIVITY TYPE

Work-based Learning

WHAT?

I recently engaged in an in-house teaching session focused on the interpretation of Arterial Blood Gases (ABGs). This educational activity was facilitated by a clinical educator from the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), who provided expert guidance on the subject.

The session specifically introduced a structured, systematic approach to interpreting these critical physiological parameters. Utilising anonymised clinical case examples, the educator demonstrated how to approach ABG analysis in a methodical manner, moving beyond fragmented understanding to a more cohesive interpretation.

SO WHAT?

This structured approach has significantly enhanced my comprehension of ABG interpretation, offering a clearer framework than my previous, more informal methods. I now have a more robust understanding of how to systematically analyse acid-base balance, which is crucial for evaluating respiratory and metabolic status in complex patients.

Furthermore, the session underscored the clinical significance of subtle variations within ABG results. By reviewing anonymised examples, I gained a deeper appreciation for how seemingly minor deviations can reflect substantial underlying physiological disturbances. This experience highlighted the importance of precise and thorough interpretation in informing clinical decision-making and patient management.

Learning directly from an ICU clinical educator provided invaluable practical insights and clinical context that are often challenging to acquire solely through independent study or textbooks. This reinforces my recognition of the significant benefits derived from specialised, expert-led training for complex clinical skills.

NOW WHAT?

Moving forward, I intend to integrate the structured ABG interpretation methodology into my daily clinical practice. This will involve consistently applying the systematic approach to analysing pH, PaCO₂, HCO₃, and SaO₂ in all relevant patient presentations, ensuring a comprehensive and accurate assessment.

To further consolidate my learning and address any emerging uncertainties, I will proactively seek opportunities to discuss complex or challenging ABG interpretations with senior colleagues or the session's educator. This collaborative approach will support the refinement of my analytical skills and ensure continued professional development in this specialised area.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS MAPPING

Understand the structure and function of the human body, together with knowledge of physical and mental health, disease, disorder and dysfunction relevant to their profession

The session enhanced my understanding of the structure and function of the human body, specifically focusing on physiological parameters related to acid-base balance and their clinical significance in respiratory and metabolic systems.

Change their practice as needed to take account of new developments, technologies and changing contexts

I have updated my practice by incorporating a structured approach to ABG interpretation, demonstrating an ability to adapt to new knowledge and improve clinical assessment skills.

Understand the value of reflective practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection to support continuous improvement

This reflection documents my learning from the ABG teaching session, demonstrating an understanding of reflective practice and its value in supporting continuous improvement in my clinical skills.