General Presentation Syllabus

**Title:** *How Vital Are Vital Signs?*

**Intended Audience:** General

**Length:** 60 minutes

**NCCP Category:** Local or Individual

**Brief Description:**

Blood pressure, pulse, respirations, pulse oximetry. We all call them “vital signs,” and some people even add temperature and CO2 to the list. But how “vital” are vital signs, really? How important are a bunch of numbers when your patient already looks like death on a cracker? All too often, inexperienced EMT's anchor on obtaining a set of vital signs, to the detriment of even lifesaving interventions; they're busy counting the rate of agonal respirations, when they should be providing normal ones. Let's face it, when your patient is in danger of dying in the next few minutes, you don't need to know what the vital signs \*are\*, you just need to know what the vital signs \*aren't\*, and you can get that information with your basic senses, without the need of a stethoscope, pulse oximeter, or sphygmomanometer. Join Kelly Grayson as he explains how and when vital signs are important, and when they can be deferred until later.

**Objectives:**

1. Discuss vital signs in the context of the patient’s clinical presentation.
2. Discuss indirect, observational measures of mental status, respirations, and perfusion that do not require special equipment.
3. Discuss prioritization of lifesaving interventions over comprehensive assessment.
4. Describe clinical presentations where immediate and accurate vital signs are necessary to proper patient care.
5. Evaluate several patient scenarios where vital signs are unnecessary to provide adequate care.

**Resources Required:** LCD projector, computer audio, wireless mouse, wireless microphone