Elena's incident involved an unplanned swim in turbulent current near an undercut rock, with full submersion and rescue by throw bag. She presents alert and breathing spontaneously but with persistent coughing, labored respirations, faint wheezing, and crackles (rales) in her lungs. This indicates a non-fatal drowning with water aspiration and the risk of delayed, pulmonary edema developing in the next several hours. Her anticipated problems include worsening respiratory distress that may lead to respiratory arrest and a fatal drowning.

Because she may have hit rocks during her swim, perform a focused spine assessment to determine whether spinal precautions are necessary. Confirm she is reliable with no spine pain, no midline spinal tenderness, normal motor exams on her hands and feet, and no distracting injuries.

1. If the focused spine assessment is negative (all criteria met), you can rule out a spinal injury and focus on managing her respiratory condition.

2. If the assessment is positive (any criteria not met), treat her as having a possible spinal injury: maintain spinal precautions, avoid unnecessary movement, keep her in a position that supports breathing without compromising spine protection, and increase evacuation urgency to Level 2, requesting a commercial litter or other assisted transport.

Do what you can to warm her. Keep her in a sitting position leaning slightly forward for easier breathing, and offer reassurance. Continue to monitor her breathing rate, effort, lung sounds, and mental status. Initiate a Level 1 evacuation to definitive care for observation and possible imaging. Request EMS access at the fastest river takeout or roadside point. Ensure the uninjured raft clients and guides are safe, contact the river manager and decide whether the trip should continue or not.