

Decision Guide Case Study No. 5

Advanced Dementia

Brief Case History

Mrs. Monroe is a 99 year-old female resident with advanced dementia whose son is the health care surrogate. Because of his job, he has not come to visit his mother for the last two years, but he is frequently in contact with staff at the nursing home to inquire about his mother.

Mrs. Monroe's dementia has continued to progress to where she is totally dependent for ADLs, non-ambulatory requiring a wheelchair, and has limited speech. Her health history includes heart failure, hypertension, urinary incontinence, and osteoarthritis.

Change in Condition

Over the past 24 hours, Mrs. Monroe has experienced increased confusion most likely related to a urinary tract infection. She is lethargic but responds nonverbally to stimuli. You contact the nurse practitioner who orders a Complete Blood Count (CBC) with differential, a Basic Metabolic Profile (BMP), and Urine Analysis (UA) with a Culture and Sensitivity (C&S). She requested vital signs every 15 minutes and told you she would be there in 30 minutes.

As part of the protocol the nurse practitioner contacted the son to inform him Mrs. Monroe had experienced a change in condition. He requested she go to the hospital where "she will get better care". The nurse practitioner informed the son that she could treat his mother in the nursing home with antibiotics and that going to the hospital was not in his mother's best interest. He angrily insisted that his mother go to the hospital because he wanted her to "live to 100".

Actions Taken

The NP was able to convince Mrs. Monroe's son to wait until they received the results of the lab work but in the meantime she would start antibiotics. However, within an hour of the phone call, Mrs. Monroe's son called back and said he didn't want to wait and that the NP should send his mother to the hospital immediately. Mrs. Monroe's son has a good relationship with you, so the NP asks for your assistance in talking with him.

Case Study Analysis for Discussion

- 1) Knowing Mrs. Monroe's son has not seen his mother in two years, how can you give him a clearer picture of her overall condition?

- 2) What key points would you discuss with her son about hospitalization for someone like his mother who has advanced dementia? How can you use the Guide in this discussion?
- 3) How would the discussion and outcomes have been different if Mrs. Monroe had advance directives in place? How could you use the Guide to initiate a conversation about advance directives once this crisis has been resolved?
- 4) How can your facility ensure that advance directives have been discussed with every resident before a crisis arises?
- 5) Hospice care for someone with advanced dementia and a decline in cognitive and physical function may be the best option. Using the Guide, discuss what would you say to her son about this as an option. When is the best time to discuss the benefits of hospice care?
- 6) Using the Guide, what steps could you take to prevent hospitalization for someone like Mrs. Monroe in the future?