

Skills practice scenario 8 – heart failure

Remember the 'patient' and 'professional' scripts need to be presented on separate folded sheets for the trio group work. It doesn't matter if details are changed, e.g. gender or age of 'patient' or title of 'professional', if that works better for the group.

'Patient': Phyllis or Jim Lewis

You're 91 years old, you know you're lucky, you have a wonderful family – both the 'girls' visit most weeks and the grandchildren and great grandchildren give you great pleasure. Strange to think its 12 years since Jim/Phyllis (your spouse) died, you still miss him/her but you think he/she'd be proud of how you've managed.

Your brain is active as ever – you can still finish the crossword most days, but you do feel really old now, everything is such an effort but what can you expect at 91? You know there are no magic cures and accept that you are coming to the end of a full life.

You'd like to talk about your funeral – you'd hate to think of people in black and long faces - and to the girls about some of your things. You also feel you should change your will now – it would be better to leave any money that is left to the grandchildren now but hope that does not cause any family upsets. The problem is that whenever you try to talk about these things, the girls seem really uncomfortable and try to change the subject – they think you are being morbid.

And there is all this talk about resuscitation - they always seem to be bringing people back in 'Casualty' but if your heart stopped you know it would be that you've just worn out – the last thing you'd want is someone to try to restart it, with drips and hospital and all – you hate that. You're quite happy to accept when the time comes that's it – you just hope you are not a burden. The problem is how do you talk about these things – maybe your GP can help when you see him/her for your check-up.



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'Professional': Dr Fitzgerald

Mr/Mrs Lewis is coming for a regular review. He/she has pretty advanced cardiac failure, renal impairment and osteoarthritis but still manages in his/her wardened flat with good support from his/her daughters. You both accept there is nothing much more in the way of treatment – he/she is quite accepting of this and always tells you how lucky he/she has been.