

The Growing Challenge of Alzheimer's Disease in Residential Settings: Module 2

The Story of Mrs. Young - A Case Example

You are the manager of Green Gardens Senior Housing Development. Mrs. Young is a 76-year-old resident who is widowed and lives alone. You have noticed that she has been showing signs of worsening memory loss over the past year or so. However, she remains pleasant, outgoing, and continues to live independently in her own apartment. Lately, her daughter has noticed that Mrs. Young has had some difficulty balancing her checkbook. You also know that she has forgotten to pay her rent on time but have not informed the daughter thus far.

One busy day, Mrs. Young and her daughter have a couple of appointments. Upon the daughter's arrival at Mrs. Young's apartment, she has forgotten about the day's scheduled activities. She hurriedly gets ready and drives herself and her daughter in her car to an attorney's office. Mrs. Young signs a new will. During the meeting with the daughter and attorney, it becomes clear that Mrs. Young has forgotten why she wants to sign a new will but proceeds anyway.

Driving out of the parking lot, Mrs. Young backs into a parked car. The other car is undamaged but Mrs. Young's car sustains a broken taillight. This is the second accident in the past month and she also received a traffic violation two months ago for gliding past a stop sign.

Mrs. Young and her daughter then visit her doctor for a routine exam. She cannot recall her two medications nor can she recall when she last took her blood pressure pills. The doctor tells the daughter that there is a chance that Mrs. Young is "getting senile." The doctor discovers that Mrs. Young may have a precancerous lesion. The doctor explains that she needs outpatient surgery to remove the potential problem. Mrs. Young replies, "And what problem are we talking about?" The daughter makes the arrangements for the surgery a week later.

Mrs. Young and the daughter return to her apartment for lunch. She prepares some soup which eventually boils over but manages to put together a couple of sandwiches. On the way out of the building that day, the daughter recounts the day's events and remarks, "I guess I'll need to keep a closer eye on Mother."

Questions for discussion:

- 1) What are the issues regarding Mrs. Young's autonomy?
- 2) Is she competent?
- 3) Can she still live alone?
- 4) What is your role and responsibility here?
- 5) How might others be helpful?

Potential & Real Risks - Person 1

Description of Symptoms - Person 2

Potential & Real Risks - Person 2