

## **Collaborative Care for Older People with Mental Health Issues**

Maurice is a seventy-six year old retired school principal, father of five and widow. His wife Rita died approximately ten years ago.

Maurice lives in a regional town in NSW. Three of his children have moved to the city. Two of his children live locally.

Maurice has always enjoyed driving. He and Rita had planned on being 'grey nomads' post Maurice's retirement, however Rita was diagnosed with breast cancer in her late fifties which quickly and unexpectedly spread. Maurice took an early retirement to provide Rita with the care she needed. Rita died suddenly around Easter ten years ago, following a post-operative stroke.

Maurice was devastated; Rita was his first and only love, with whom he had been happily married for over thirty years. Her sudden death meant he was unable to keep a promise to take her to her favourite park one last time and feed the swans – a 'betrayal' as he calls it, for which he has not forgiven himself.

Following Rita's death Maurice begins drinking again – he hasn't had a drink for about twenty years, since Rita, a teetotaler, had urged him to abstain. He'd just been made school principal at the time, and a few drinks after work helped soothe away the stressors of his new job role. Maurice didn't think he had a drinking problem... 'just a drink here or there to take the edge off' but he was happy, as always, to oblige his wife's request. At the time he didn't share with Rita how hard giving up alcohol actually had been. Now he is surprised by how easy it is to start again.

Maurice's father had died of an 'accidental overdose' of prescription sleeping tablets when he was 80 years old. Maurice has been ruminating on this and often finds himself thinking that 'his number may be up soon....'

Two of Maurice's children, Peter and Maz, live locally. Peter is a school teacher married with three children of his own, and Maz is a potter who is in a committed same sex relationship. Maurice has struggled to accept Maz's lifestyle choices. Peter is Maurice's first and main point of familial contact, mainly through email.

Maurice was always very quick to take up new technologies in his teaching career. Maz recently gave him an iPad which he uses for games, music and keeping in contact with his grandchildren via Facebook and email. He is often surprised just how many hours he can lose playing with that 'silly device'.

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## MHPN WEBINAR CASE STUDY

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Since Rita's death, Maurice has engaged with Probus. He is the secretary of his branch and until recently regularly visited the local Men's Shed on the recommendation of a fellow Probus member.

On Easter Saturday, Maurice falls at home. He rings Peter who picks him up and drops him off at the Emergency Department of the local hospital. Maurice is admitted overnight for observation as, while he only sustained a sprain to his ankle, the triage nurse notices that he is agitated and tired.

The following day the hospital calls Peter to pick up Maurice.

The discharge nurse shares with Peter that Maurice was very anxious overnight and has not slept well. Maurice told the night shift nurse that recently nights have been difficult for him; he starts to worry about things like the problems he has encountered of late in remembering Probus member's names and how on a few occasions, whilst driving at night, he has found himself somewhere, not knowing how he got there or why he was there.

He has also had a few near misses when pulling into traffic, failing until the last minute to see the oncoming traffic. On these occasions and even sometimes just of an evening when he is at home relaxing, he has also experienced an overwhelming fear, a strange palpitation in his throat and an inability to 'find his breath'; an experience he has not had for some time, in fact, not since those early days when he had just been made school principal.

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The nurse also tells Peter that their unit has liaised with Maurice's GP and that a recent 75 year old Health Check has identified that Maurice has high PSA, hypertension and high cholesterol. Maurice is, according to the GP, aware of these results.

All of this is new to Peter and he is taken by surprise. He is disturbed when the nurse suggests 'you'll need to start sorting out where your Dad will go when the time comes' and in the meantime that he should start thinking about home help and meals on wheels. Peter states that with three children under the age of six and a wife struggling with postnatal depression he hasn't the time, but that he is more than happy to shoot off an email 'and put the word out to my brothers and sisters'.

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