

Mental Health Consult Case Study

Geriatric Depression Case Study, Part 2

Daniel returns one year later for his annual visit and tells the clinic nurse that his wife recently died in a car accident. The nurse notes that Daniel, “looks really different. He must have lost 20 pounds since last year.” The physician enters the room and immediately notices Daniel’s slumped, somewhat haphazard appearance, a stark contrast to the extroverted, and generally well-dressed patient he has known over the past 15 years. The physician sits and extends his condolences, but Daniel barely raised his head.

The physician is concerned that Daniel could be severely depressed and screens him as such. Daniel has positive responses for virtually every depressive symptom but does not endorse suicidal thoughts.

Still concerned, the physician asks Daniel what still brings him joy in his life. Daniel responds, “Being with my wife. She is still my everything. I never realized how much she meant to me. She was with me through law school and every part of my life. She gives me hope.” As Daniel speaks, the physician notes he seems somewhat distracted, looking off into space as if having another conversation. The physician asks Daniel about it. “I was just talking to Sarah; I thought you realized she is here. She’s all around us. She talks to me every day. One day soon, I’m going to join her, and she will tell me the path to take.”

The physician again asks Daniel if he is suicidal.

“No, I’m not suicidal, I just need to be reunited with my wife, and that’s what she tells me every day.” The physician excuses himself from the room, and asks the nurse to arrange transport for Daniel to the nearest emergency room. “I think he is psychotic,” he says.