

## Examining Risks and Benefits to Enhance Quality of Life Case Studies

Norman, 89 years old, recently moved to a retirement community to live closer to his daughter. He occasionally still works as a consultant. He just successfully completed treatment for prostate cancer. His past medical history includes a CVA two years ago with residual word-finding problems, hypertension, and a neurogenic bladder. He self catheterizes four times a day. He ambulates with a cane and feels stronger after completing a month of physical therapy. He wants to take a two-hour bus trip for a weekend with visit friends. His family is hesitant to allow this because of safety concerns.

Sara was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease six years ago when she was 83 years old. The progression of her illness now requires care in an assisted living facility. Her diet has been changed to pureed foods secondary to swallowing issues. Sara was an excellent cook and always enjoyed the taste and texture of good food. She now refuses to eat because, "I am not a baby and I don't want that baby food." Her family feels that eating is one of the only pleasures she has left and her current diet is not satisfactory. They are considering allowing her to eat the food she loves.

Henry has smoked cigarettes since he was 15 years old. Now at 75, he has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. His health care team has advised him to stop smoking. He tried a few times in his life, but was never successful and says, "Quite honestly, I really enjoy smoking." The visiting nurse always includes smoking cessation in her home visit and has told him that there is not much she can do for him unless he stops smoking.

Elizabeth is 90 years old and resides in an assisted living facility. She was not happy to move to assisted living but understood that she needed more help with cooking, shopping, and dressing. In her younger years, she was a professional ballet dancer. She was delighted to discover that the assisted living facility had an exercise bar in physical therapy. One night she stretched her arms and legs on the bar using the warm up exercises of a ballerina and said, "It feels so good to get back into it...my world has opened up again!" Her world quickly closed again when she was told she was not allowed to do the warm up exercises because it was too dangerous.

Paul's birthday was coming up. He was going to be 80 and his family planned a big party. When asked what he wanted for his birthday, he proudly proclaimed, "A bike." His family laughed and then they realized that he was serious, they told him they did not feel comfortable with that gift. He told them that he would buy his own if they would not give him a bike for his birthday.

John currently lives in an assisted living facility. His family describes him as very independent. He had fallen a few times in the past, but with the help of physical therapy and external cues from the staff, he has been fall free for a year. Last year, at the age of 68, he was diagnosed

with dementia. He is supposed to self ambulate in his wheel chair but prefers to stand and use it as a walker, rolling it down the hall. When the staff reminds him he should sit in the chair he nods or winks and keeps walking.

Catherine, who is 72 years old, has felt like a school girl in love since she met Harry, who is 88. She never thought she would feel this way again since her husband died 10 years ago. Harry has talked about going on a cruise together and Catherine is considering the trip. They have become more intimate over the past few months, and Catherine feels that this trip will bring them closer together. They would share a room which has Catherine's daughter quite upset. Catherine giggles as she exclaims, "Wow, the tables are really turned here!" Catherine has some apprehension about getting closer to Harry, expressing a concern: "What if he dies too?"