



'Can Do' for Veterans

**Alternate case stories for
'Can Do' for Families and Carers**

Margaret: mother of an army veteran

Case story

I've got a bit of eczema on my feet again. That'll be my fault. I get so stressed and worked up and then I drop my bundle. The tablets I've got...there's a few different ones in the cupboard... they can help calm me down and these days, I'll go to the fridge and have a wine or two as well. I call it my 'relax-o-magic'. I don't get it out if I think my son is coming over though. It's best to keep the grog right out of the picture.

He's having problems again. He did twelve years in the Army and then Timor and came back a completely different boy. Timor was the finish of him. A month ago his wife left him and now he says he wants to move back to live with me. Here, at home. But I don't know if I could handle it. I'm too old to go through all that. I looked after my youngest brother after Vietnam – it's like the same story all over again

I can always see when Jack's getting sick. The atmosphere changes. Actually, even my dog picks up on it. She'll watch him and get out of his way when he starts moving roughly around the house, rousing on everything, picking fault with the tiniest things. Nothing's right. And then you start worrying about him and whether he's going to commit some terrible damage to himself or someone else.

He's taking pills. He'll say he isn't and you've just got to go along with it. Sometimes I get so beside myself, I think I'm losing it. I feel like I'm the one who's disturbed, not him.

Points for discussion

1. What are the important issues in relation to Margaret's health and wellbeing?
2. If Margaret were telling you her story how could you and your service help?
3. What are the risks and what assessments might you make?
4. How would you *prioritise* the risks that Margaret presents with?
5. What interventions might be useful at this consultation?
6. What other longer term strategies could be considered and how would you ensure effective follow up?
7. What could WVCS services add that your service cannot offer?
8. What support could other local health and community services offer at this point and how would you access them?

Facilitator's notes

Story Vignette – feedback session

- The points for discussion are to trigger group discussion.
- Use the whiteboard to write up main ideas.
- The facilitator's notes below are to direct discussion and prompt further explanation of important issues.
- Ensure only one participant speaks at a time and is heard by the entire group. Be aware of who is speaking and who is not.
- Invite participation from everyone.
- Reflect and if necessary rephrase the participant's comment to link its relevance to the topic.

Be sure to allow the different aspects of care on offer from the various service providers in the room. Encourage them to think about how these fit together. E.g. a youth service may be able to offer a number of services but how would they link up with a GP and put the family into contact with VVCS? Do they know what a GP can offer and how they can refer to specialist mental health services if necessary? Ask a GP participant to explain and to talk about the use of care plans and referral pathways when working with patients with mental health and substance use problems.

Facilitator's trigger questions

- Discuss Margaret's story - what other history would participants need to obtain to get a full picture?
- There are a number of issues presented in this vignette – encourage participants to *prioritise* the risks that Margaret faces and to develop short and longer term strategies to assist him.
- Ensure participants discuss Margaret's use of medications and alcohol.
- Encourage participants to consider a home medicine review to check Margaret's mix of medications.
- Consider Margaret may be grieving for the son she knew and seems to have 'lost' since he came back from Timor.
- Margaret seems quite frightened of her son – is there domestic violence involved here? Ask how participants would explore this issue with Margaret and what options they have if they found it was a problem.
- Consider the range of local services that may be able to support Margaret and her family.
- Explore in particular the role and availability of VVCS services for Margaret