



'Can Do' for Veterans

Alternate case story for

'Can Do' for Older People

David: 70 year old veteran

Case story

Just when you start thinking you've got a bit of peace, the thing starts up again. It finds you and I can feel myself being pulled down with it.

It was the strangest thing that set me off because I was doing well. Then three weeks ago, I was down the street and I saw this dog get run over by this woman in a car. The dog let out this sound, shocking and it was like everything came back. I was in Korea and Vietnam and I don't think I've really been right since.

I used to go on the grog and it took me years to get off that. Lost the wife and the kids in the process. Counselling helped a lot and the tablets but once I started getting on top, I gave those away. And now the bloody nightmares and flashbacks have started. You're scared to go to sleep because you know what's waiting for you.

I've got heart palpitations now too and that tightness in your chest. I know a lot of blokes have it. Everything very predictable, nothing new there. It's the PTSD but to be honest, I don't think I can take it all over again. I used to jump in the car and drive over to the RSL in the next town to meet up with mates – that used to settle me somehow, but now my eyes aren't so good so I've given away driving. I can see myself going back on the drink unless I do something. I really need some help now.

Points for discussion

1. What are the important issues for David?
2. If David were telling you his 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 David 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 VVCS 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 David'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 identify and *prioritise* the risks that David faces and to develop short and longer term strategies to assist him.
- Raise the possibility of alternate diagnosis for David rather than PTSD – e.g. are his heart palpitations part of his anxiety or could they be a physical heart condition?
- David has previously been amenable to counselling and medication – should this be resumed?
- What might be different re David's management now that he is 70 and less mobile than before?
- Isolation seems to be an issue here. Discuss.
- Make it clear that David's situation cannot be sorted out in one consultation –he needs longer term support.
- Discuss the risks and effects of alcohol use on David's mental health?
- Consider the range of local services that may be able to support David? Explore in particular the role and availability of VVCS services for David.