

Serious Illness Conversation Guide role play COVID case one

Actor Case

Diabetes, hypertension and mild chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) - Mr./Mrs. Williams

Character's clinical problem

Mrs./Mr. Samantha/Samuel (Sam) Williams is a 75 year-old retired postie who has a history of diabetes, hypertension and mild COPD. Last winter s/he developed a bad chest infection and required several courses of antibiotics and a course of steroids.

Sam is still active at home and in the community, though finds s/he has to take things at a slightly slower pace than when he/she first retired. S/he enjoys gardening and volunteers at the local community allotment.

Day 6: Mrs./Mr. Williams has a six day history of cough, fevers, body aches and increasing shortness of breath. S/he was notified yesterday that the swab taken at the general practice has confirmed a diagnosis of COVID-19.

You are working in a community setting and have been asked to follow up with Mrs./Mr Williams via a video link, to talk about her/his diagnosis and what that might mean for them.

At this stage recovery is hopeful.

.....
Day 9: Mrs./Mr. Williams has continued to deteriorate and has required hospital admission. S/he has severe shortness of breath and increasing O2 requirements.

Recovery is now uncertain.

Personal history

Life experience – You live at home with your partner. You enjoy the company of your network of good friends and are very close to your 2 grandchildren.

Values – Relationships and continuity are important. You appreciate information being delivered in a straight forward manner.

Emotion – You have been keeping an eye on all the media messaging about COVID. Your partner keeps telling you not to worry, but you have been increasingly aware that you have several high risk factors and have been increasingly vigilant about physical distancing when out for your daily walk.

Day 6: You shocked and surprised you have been diagnosed with COVID, and while you are aware you have risk factors, are confident you will recover. You are pleased your partner is in your bubble to provide support and care.

Day 9: You are increasingly scared and worried about your deterioration in health. You always assumed you would get better but are now realizing you may not. You are tired, exhausted and your thoughts are turning to putting provisions in place for your whānau if you don't recover. The thought of dying alone without being able to say goodbye to your partner, daughter and grandchildren is causing you distress.

Social – You are happy for your whanau to be kept fully informed.

Suggested responses to the guide prompts

Prompt	Suggested response Day 6	Suggested responses Day 9
Set-up	<p><i>It is.</i></p> <p><i>It's just me at home right now. My partner is out for his daily walk. I'm ok to talk by myself.</i></p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p><i>No. My husband is sick now too. I don't want to be worrying him just yet. But it would be good if you could give him a call later and let him know what's going on.</i></p>
Illness Understanding	<p><i>They told me yesterday that I tested positive to COVID. If I'm honest I'm not feeling too bad - just a bit of a cough, a bit achy and I run out of puff when I am walking around. I didn't really expect to test positive. I know from everything you see on the telly, that my diabetes and emphysema mean I am in the 'high risk group'.</i></p>	<p><i>I know I am getting sicker. It is getting harder and harder to breath.</i></p>
Information Preferences	<p><i>I like it pretty straight up. You don't need to dress any information up with fluff and ribbons.</i></p>	
Prognostic Communication	<p><i>I hope I will continue to do well too! But you think I could be one of the people who might get really sick? Really?? Should I be worried???</i></p>	
Priorities	<p><i>To get better! I have too much to live for. I want to be given a good shot. Don't be thinking because I'm in the 'high risk group' that I'm ready to just roll over die.</i></p>	<p><i>Please make sure my whanau are kept up to date. It is so hard not being able to see them when I am feeling this awful.</i></p> <p><i>To see my grandkids one last time. That would mean a lot.</i></p>
Worries	<p><i>Appearing weak, helpless. Becoming a burden on my family. It's just my husband here with me in my bubble. He will struggle to look after me if I get really sick.</i></p>	<p><i>How quickly things are changing is terrifying me. I never thought I'd be one of the people who mightn't get better. But I'm worried now that might be the case. I'm really worried about my whānau if I don't recover.</i></p> <p><i>The thought that I might die alone without being able to say goodbye to my family, it is breaking my heart.</i></p>



Critical Abilities	<i>Being able to care for myself at home. Still being able to garden and hang out with my grandkids.</i>	<i>Being well enough to care for myself again. It is horrible having to rely on the nurses to help me shower and toilet. I wouldn't want to be like this long term.</i>
Tradeoffs/ What you will do for more time	<i>Quite a lot I think. If you needed to put me on one of those breathing machines they keep talking about on the telly, I'd be OK with that. As long as you can get me back to being well enough to go home after it is all over. I'm too young to end up in one of those old person homes.</i>	<i>The doctors have said, because of the issues I've had with my lungs in recent years, that I mightn't be a candidate for the breathing machine. I think I would still want everything else tried. If it is going to let me get better and eventually be well enough to go home.</i>

© 2018 VitalTalk (www.vitaltalk.org) in partnership with Ariadne Labs: A Joint Center for Health Systems Innovation (www.riadnelabs.org) between Brigham and Women's Hospital and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. This project was funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>