

Difficult situations: *Alternatives to antipsychotic medication*

Activity

Betty has dementia and just moved into a residential home. The staff team have quickly become challenged by some of her behaviour. Some staff suggest that her GP could prescribe antipsychotics to help her 'be more settled'.

Read through the eight examples of Betty's behaviour that some staff believe may be treated through antipsychotic medication.

Then look at the list of possible explanations or reasons for behaviour.

Try to match each behaviour up with a possible explanation.

For example:

Behaviour – someone refusing to eat

Possible explanation – the person believes they have to pay for food and they don't have any money

Examples of behaviour

- a. Betty walks around the home a lot, often going in other residents' bedrooms.
- b. Betty refuses to eat in the dining room.
- c. Betty often takes her clothes off, sometimes in the living room.
- d. Betty sometimes refuses to get out of bed all day, particularly when she has been incontinent and staff want to help her to freshen up and change her sheets.
- e. Betty has angrily accused staff of stealing her belongings from her room.
- f. Betty likes to stay up very late and annoys some staff when she wants to be with them in the office at night.
- g. Betty is often in a bad mood first thing in the morning, and shouts and lashes out at staff trying to help her to get up.
- h. Betty asks when she is going home many, many times a day.

Possible explanations

- a. Betty is very embarrassed about the difficulties that dementia causes her, and tries to keep these private where possible.
- b. Betty's hearing aid is set very high, and everyday noise sounds very shrill.
- c. Betty has arthritis which is especially painful in the morning before she has had any pain relief.
- d. Betty's family have told her that she is going into a home for a 'short break'.
- e. Betty isn't able to remember where her bedroom is.
- f. Betty used to work night shifts as a nurse.
- g. Betty feels hot in the home.

Betty is finding it difficult to keep track of her belongings in a new environment.

Once you have identified a possible explanation for each type of challenging behaviour, can you come up with ideas for what sort of action staff could take to meet Betty's needs?

Do you think antipsychotic drugs would be useful in 'managing' any of these types of behaviour?