

Advocating for Risk

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Later Life

- Complexity
 - Multiple conditions (3 chronic conditions at 75y)
 - Multiple medications (5 prescribed meds at 75y)
- Increased cognitive impairment
 - Dementia (15-20% at 75y, 30-45% at 85y (WHO))
- Prejudice – older people themselves and others

- Overprotection: she's 'vulnerable'/'at risk' and needs to be kept safe/ protected from herself



"Eighty-seven. How about yours?"

- Undertreatment: what can you expect at her/my age?



"Because of your age, I'm going to recommend doing nothing."

'Risk society' (Beck 1986)

- There are hazards and potential threats everywhere
- We are all vulnerable and we need to be ever vigilant
- Healthcare:
 - Risk has taken over from the assessment of need
 - Uncertainty ('not known for sure what will happen' or 'can't predict safety') now seems to equate to 'risk' (Parsloe 1999).
 - Fear of being blamed, sued, unwelcome media attention
 - Questioning whether a person has capacity to make judgements about risk
 - 'Interests' conflated with safety

'Someone who depicts the world as risk will ultimately become incapable of action'.

Aging Mother Knows Any Wrong Move Could Be Taken For Telltale Sign Of Dementia

I have to be on top of my game every single day, because if I start slipping up, it's only a matter of time before they put me in a home



And I always speak at a steady, even pace—too fast and I might trip over a word, too slow and they might think I'm struggling to come up with the right words.

Maybe I should leave some finished crossword puzzles lying around for people to find just in case.

I must be neatly dressed and perfectly groomed at all times, as any slight inattention to personal care could arouse suspicions of a deteriorating mind.

A cross-sectional study of doctors', managers' and public representatives' views regarding acceptable level of risk in discharges from the emergency department

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- What risk of a preventable death after discharge from the ED is acceptable?

	Average	“None”
• Doctors	1/1000	8%
• Managers	1/5000	15%
• Public representatives	1/10000	25%

How ADM Act might be subverted

Fear of criticism.

- Nurse Nellie Nervous: *“He’s making a foolish decision. There might be something wrong with him and I’d be criticised if I don’t check it out. I know - I’ll get a capacity assessment!”*
- Surgeon Scaredy: *‘I’ve explained the risks and benefits and she consents to surgery. However, she is old and if something went wrong a relative might say that she didn’t really understand the risks. She needs a formal capacity assessment’.*

Overly protectionist or paternalistic attitudes

- Capacity legislation means we can now make people do what we believe is best for them.

- Dr Nannie O'State:

He's not doing what I advise.

He seems normal but of course he can't be.

There must some test that will be abnormal

Let's do an MMSE/MOCA

Social workers took out court order to stop couple going on HOLIDAY because wife had dementia

By EMMA REYNOLDS

UPDATED: 17:39 GMT, 21 January 2012



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An elderly couple were banned from going on holiday together after their local council said it was too risky.

In an astonishing example of the nanny state at work, Norman Davies and Peggy Ross were told by Cardiff Council that they could not go on the planned Mediterranean cruise, just days before they were due to leave.

Over-zealous social workers claimed Mrs Ross, who suffers from dementia, was in danger of wandering off or falling overboard.



Support people with dementia in the community

- Yes it needs community supports, resources, etc
- But attitudes– families, professionals, organisations and legal framework as important

Standard Argument?

- You are not able to care for yourself properly
- You will be better off in residential home where you will receive such care

How better off?

- It'll be nice for you to be with other confused people?
- You'll be less confused?
 - 'Nursing home placement associated with accelerated short-term cognitive decline in Alzheimer's disease'. (Wilson, Am J Psych 2007)
- You'll be happier?
 - 'Increased feelings of loneliness and marginalization; psychiatric symptoms worsened and quality of life perceived more poorly'. (Scocco, Int J Geriatr Psych 2006)
- You'll get better medical care?
 - Antipsychotic medication misuse
 - Restraints
 - Poorer management of chronic diseases
- You'll live longer?
 - Shorter life expectancy in Alzheimer's disease admitted to LTC (McKee, J Gerontol 2006)

Need to reduce use of antipsychotics in dementia

**The use of
antipsychotic medication
for people with dementia:**

Time for action

**A report for the
Minister of State for Care Services
by
Professor Sube Banerjee**

An independent report commissioned and funded by the
Department of Health

- Treating 100 people with dementia with an atypical antipsychotic drug for 12 weeks:
 - 10–20 patients with behaviour disturbance will show clinically significant improvement in these symptoms
 - 1 will die
 - 1 will have a severe stroke
 - 1 will have a less severe stroke

HEALTH

STD Epidemic Spreads Among Elderly Due To Unprotected Sex

By [Reissa Su](#) [@reissasu](#) on January 22 2014 7:08 PM

Senior Citizens Spreading STDs Like Wildfire

By [Rebecca Savastio](#) on January 21, 2014 · [5 Comments](#)

Center for Disease Control and Prevention Bulletin 2014

Among Americans 65y and older 2007-2011 chlamydia infections increased by 31 percent and syphilis by 52 percent.

‘Retirement communities and assisted living facilities are becoming like college campuses. If doctors aren’t having “the talk,” we have to get safe sex counsellors more involved. These facilities could also consider making condoms readily available’. Ezekiel J. Emanuel