

Date: 27 February, 2001

This is the end of the month and the bad time of Jan's 'cycle' (Jan went through the menopause some years ago). For the first time since her last assessment she has started some serious sundowning today. Is this part of the steady deterioration? Has something set it off again? Is it the reduction the consultant has made in Jan's medication? This is what makes things very difficult for the carer—not knowing. Usually this happens on a Friday afternoon when a whole weekend looms with no help on hand—though we do have an emergency place available at the mental health unit at hospital if I call on it, and the GP has given me his mobile phone number. The truth of the matter is that when this happens, there IS no help; one is left to cope on one's own.

Time		Notes and thoughts
00	00	
01	00	
02	00	
03	00	
04	00	Jan woke and I took her to the bathroom. Saw her through going there and then returned her to bed. She was 'cold'.
05	00	
06	00	
07	00	

08	00	Jan woke up, confused and incoherent. She said "I don't know where I am". I told her to take things slowly. Much worse than usual today.	All you can do is take things slowly.
		Took a while to get her out of bed, and into her housecoat and slippers. Had to guide her very carefully downstairs today. She said she knew me, but didn't know where she was, still. Laced her drink with Lactolose, and then gave her the usual breakfast. Some reluctance in eating it. Hardly had any tea.	Had I known, I would have given a first Promazine dose instead of Lactolose.
09	00	Led her upstairs and today had a long sell to do on getting dressed. Jan said 'listen to me', but could not say anything that meant anything.	Dreadful to have someone desperate to talk, but unable to.
		Doing her teeth was also a long affair—on a day like this everything is a nightmare. Took ages to get her socks and shoes on—they were 'awful'. Walked her downstairs to the lounge and helped her to comb her hair. She was very unsettled after this, roaming and wearing both gloves.	
10	00	Suggested we have a coffee—my standard distraction tactic—but she refused outright. Told her we needed to do some shopping and I managed to get her boots on her. Warmed up the car; put her coat on; drove to the village.	
		It really was cold in the village, and we walked to the post office—Jan just stood in everyone's way—to the bakery where I bought a Danish I knew Jan used to love, but probably would not eat, and then to the Co-op.	
11	00	Drove straight home; Jan was very quiet—additionally confused I think. When we entered the house, she said "I don't know where I am" and a little bit later, "I can go now, then". This last question is a hint that a sundowning episode is approaching.	

		Made a cup of coffee and told Jan I would go to the attic for a minute to check my e-mails. "Attic?" I explained to her again that this is our house and that I have an office in the attic. I could see she was not taking this in. Dashed upstairs for 2-3 minutes and when I arrived downstairs again, Jan was again asking if she could go now.	
12	00	I poured the coffee and put out the Danish, but Jan said "Oh no, not that. I'm off then". She kept walking to the front door, which was on the latch, and muttering to herself. She tried the door once. I had my coffee and made up a St. Clement's with a full measure of Promazine—but she would not drink it.	To press Jan to drink is a sure recipe for disaster. Sundowning episodes normally last up to 90 minutes, and all I can do is to try and keep Jan inside the house. This kind of day I can't relax for a second and can feel the stress building.
			These sorts of days I try and maintain a conversation with Jan and much of the time we are both talking—but our conversations are totally unrelated. Bizarre, but it seems helpful to talk at her and cuddle her frequently. Anything really, to distract her from walking out.
13	00	I suggested lunch several times but Jan was very dismissive. Gradually she became less drawn to the front door and hovered closer to me. I asked her to come and sit with me and she put on a wide smile and said "I've been naughty" and "I'm very very sorry" and "you're very good". This was followed by "you're very very very nice", "I've done it now" (finished sundowning?) and "I'm glad I've given them back" (goodness knows what this means)	
		I asked Jan again if she would like lunch as she had eaten nothing since a small breakfast. After a discussion lasting 20 minutes or so, she agreed to baked beans on toast, her staple.	At this stage the pressure goes off about the sundowning. Jan goes into a role of continually reassuring me.

14	00	While making lunch, I asked Jan to put some cheese in the fridge. I had to point out where the fridge was ("that thing in the corner with the white door") but she couldn't work out how to open it, even with instruction. When I served up lunch, she could not recognise the beans and toast on her plate; she left most of them. The tea went cold, even though I heated it up twice for her. I asked if she would like a fresh cup and she agreed. When I had made it, we let it cool, and then, when I pointed it out to her and said I had made a fresh cup, she gave a knowing leer and said "no, you didn't". I persuaded her to try it and she then drank it all.	
		Didn't attempt any work and kept talking to/at Jan.	
15	00		
16	00	Made a long business phone call, during which Jan paced the room and hallway.	
		Made a cup of tea and asked Jan whether she would prefer warm scones or chocolate cake. She chose chocolate cake. When she started eating, she decided she wanted warm scone, so we swapped.	
17	00	Spend 20 minutes trying to explain to Jan how to drink her tea—or maybe I misunderstood her entirely, as she could not explain what was worrying her as she walked the room, cup in hand saying "I don't know what I'm going to do with this". And "I don't know what the devil I'm doing". Then she just talked nonsense as she walked around the room with the empty cup.	
		Jan had a glove on again. Wandered.	
18	00	We had the usual orange juice suitably laced.	
19	00	I cooked cauliflower cheese, boiled egg and sautéed potatoes for dinner. We used to have chips but they are now 'chewy', so I tried sautéed potatoes for a change.	

		We took a long time to eat dinner, as Jan was confused by the contents of her plate; she was unable to distinguish between the things that were on there, and despite their being 'soft', she could not make portions small enough to get to her mouth.	
20	00		
		Had another persuasion job in letting me soak Jan's feet in a bowl of bath salts; they had become very dry and flaky.	I can get Jan to shower just once a month, with very minimal washing the rest of the time. She never baths.
21	00		
22	00		
23	00		