

### **A difficult patient: 58 year old retired teacher Mr. Jones**

Dr. Smith's receptionist hangs up the phone, exasperated after a conversation with one of the patients, Mr. Jones.

"This is the third time in the past two weeks Mr. Jones has called and demanded an urgent appointment," she tells Dr. Smith.

"And he was rude to me on the phone. You must talk to him about that!" she demanded. Dr. Smith sighs, knowing that this will likely be another frustrating encounter with Mr. Jones.

Later that afternoon, Mr. Jones is seen by Dr. Smith. He is complaining of a runny nose, cough, sinus congestion and pain for about three days. He has not tried anything to relieve his symptoms and when examined he does not have any physical findings.

Mr. Jones demands antibiotics, as he "knows his own body, and knows when he needs antibiotics." Dr. Smith recalls that he has been seen multiple times over the past few months, for many different complaints. Recently it is because of symptoms of sinus congestion, allergies and headaches.

Dr. Smith tries to bring up the issue of being rude and difficult to his receptionist. Mr. Jones quickly becomes angry and defensive. He is worried that there is something seriously wrong with him, and that Dr. Smith is not being thorough enough in diagnosing his symptoms. He demands to see a specialist, along with a prescription for antibiotics. He says if Dr. Smith doesn't give him the prescription, he will go to the walk-in clinic and get them. Dr. Smith sees that Mr. Jones is very upset and agrees to send him to a specialist along with giving him a prescription for antibiotics.

Mr. Jones returns after seeing the Ear, Nose and Throat specialist. He still appears unhappy and frustrated. He tells Dr. Smith that he was only in the specialists' office for three minutes, and wonders how the specialist can figure out what is wrong with him in so little time. The specialist recommended a steroid nasal spray and allergy testing, and told him that, antibiotics were not going to be helpful for his symptoms.

Dr. Smith senses there is something else going on with Mr. Jones. He cautiously asks him how things are going at home. After a few minutes, he tells the doctor that his wife is very sick. She has severe diabetes and is now blind, and requires a lot of care from him.

He is exhausted and very worried about her, and is not coping. He never pictured his retirement this way.....