

The Spurrell Family Part 12: Agnes and Franklin

In the emergency department Agnes was cleared of any major injury. She had a few bumps and bruises but no broken bones or obvious head injury. She was disoriented at times and unable to provide any reliable history. Because of the confusion, it was decided to admit her for observation. Not being aware of her underlying dementia, the attending doctor arranged for an extensive workup for her confusion, including a psychiatry consult.

Franklin was in critical condition with extensive internal injuries and multiple fractures. He was intubated and transferred to the ICU. Agnes was becoming more agitated at times and was asking for Frank.

Fortunately, St. James is a small town and word of the accident spread quickly. A friend and neighbor of Wavey's made contact with her through social media and Wavey called home. She was shocked to hear the news about her parents and immediately began making arrangements to return. She called the hospital to speak to the attending doctors on her way to the airport. The doctor in ICU told wavey her father was still very ill. She asked Wavey about code status. Wavey was taken aback by this question. Of course she wanted everything done. I mean, her father was a healthy man. But then she realized she did not know what her father would want. Did he mention something before over Sunday dinner that he has an advanced health care directive? She was so confused and worried that she couldn't think straight. She said could not make a decision until she arrived.

After what seemed an eternity, Wavey tracked down her mother's room. The charge nurse questioned who she was because of privacy issues, which was frustrating to Wavey. All she wanted to know was that her mother was safe. Eventually, she had the doctor paged who after confirmation of Wavey's relationship, explained her mothers current condition. Wavey was relieved to hear that her mother was stable but troubled by her worsening confusion. Her dementia was mild as the worst and they did not expect such a sudden change.

After Wavey arrived home, her father had a setback in his recovery. One night he had a cardiac arrest and had to be resuscitated. This resulted in some serious neurologic damage. Franklins doctor set up a meeting with Wavey to discuss his prognosis. In that meeting Wavey learned that the team felt Franklins prognosis was poor and he was not likely to recover. She knew her father would not want to be kept alive on machines. How she wished she could discuss this with her mother. Unfortunately, Agnes was currently deemed incompetent to make decisions. The decision would rest on Wavey and the stress was wearing her down. After a long discussion with the ICU team, including nurses, social workers, clergy, she made him a no code and asked that for now, all other measures, including ventilation be kept in place. She just wasn't ready to say goodbye.

Agnes was improving cognitively, but the wandering continued. At times she recognized wavey as her daughter but other times called her by her aunt's name. She had no memory of the accident. She was asking for Franklin all the time. She couldn't understand why he had not

come to see her. Wavey struggled with telling her mother about how ill her father was and the decisions they were faced with. She needed help to know what was the best approach. The attending physician recognized her struggle, and tried her best to help Wavey.

Sadly, Franklin had a second cardiac arrest and died a few days later. Wavey and her family were devastated. She had to tell her mother. However, Agnes would forget a few days later and ask for Franklin again. Agnes was stable from a medical point of view and now the pressure was on to send her home with Wavey. Wavey wanted so much to care for her mother at home but she had a full time job and a young family to raise. Agnes would need 24 hr. care as she was prone to wandering and they could not afford it. Wavey needed more options. The doctor came to discuss this with her and recommended that the team social worker become involved.