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Shifting from “What is the matter?” to “What matters to you?”

Shared decision making for older adults with multiple chronic conditions and their informal caregivers

Pel-Littel, R.E.

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Prologue



An unsatisfactory conversation

On a Monday morning Mr. Hendriks visits the geriatrician at the outpatient clinic. Mr. Hendriks, aged 81, is married to Mrs. Hendriks (79), who accompanies him at this appointment. The geriatrician has read the medical history of Mr. Hendriks. He suffers from diabetes, cognitive impairment, a high blood pressure, arthrosis and he has stomach complaints. 'What is the matter with you?', the geriatrician asks. Mr. Hendriks complains about pain in his knees, which bothers him when he walks. After the physical examination the geriatrician also determines that the blood pressure has risen. 'I will prescribe more painkillers for your knees and medication to lower your blood pressure.' Then the geriatrician inquires about the memory problems. Mr. Hendriks states that it doesn't bother him, but Mrs. Hendriks shakes her head while her husband speaks. 'But he gets lost when I ask him to get a bread from the bakery!' The geriatrician proposes to make an appointment for a memory test and Mr. Hendriks, reluctantly, agrees.



After the conversation:

Thoughts of Mr. Hendriks: *'More medication and I already have so many! And I am so scared to do this memory test, they will find out about my forgetfulness and send me to a nursing home....'*

Thoughts of Mrs. Hendriks: *'Why doesn't the doctor see how the situation really is? I cannot leave him alone anymore, he wanders off to I don't know where.....I am so worried about the future, how long can I take care of him?'*

Thoughts of the geriatrician: *'I have treated the arthrosis and blood pressure according to the protocol and I suspect the memory test will show some deterioration. But I doubt whether he shall comply with the changes in the new medication regime, I hope his wife will assist him with that.'*