Suicide

Mr. Ainsley: Case Study © May 2011

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Mr. Ainsley is an 81-year-old man who is currently being cared for at Evergreen skilled nursing facility in Scottsdale, AZ for physical therapy following a shoulder surgery he had at a local hospital. Mr. Ainsley is not ambulatory due to an amputation below the right knee, has difficulties with his left knee and uses a wheelchair to get around. He also sees a cardiologist named Dr. Kurtis for heart related issues frequently. Mr. Ainsley has a good relationship with Dr. Kurtis and trusts his suggestions for care.

Mr. Ainsley has been married to his wife, Arlene, for more than fifty years. He and his wife do not have any children and their only living relative is Arlene’s sister named Karen. Arlene was diagnosed with dementia five years ago and now is in the later stages of dementia. Due to Mr. Ainsley’s physical limitations and Mrs. Ainsley’s mental limitations, Karen became their full time caregiver and has power of attorney on their medical conditions. However, the care giving became too much for Karen as Arlene’s condition declined.

In response, Mr. Ainsley and Karen decided that an assisted living group home setting would be best for the couple and they moved into a group home together a year ago. However, they had to be separated after a few months due to combative behavior towards each other. Mr. Ainsley and his wife now live in separate group homes
operated by the same company and Mr. Ainsley visits his wife occasionally but these visits are difficult for him.

Karen reports that Mr. Ainsley will not accept his wife’s dementia and becomes frustrated when Karen tries to educate him on the changing behaviors of his wife, walking out of the room if she brings up the subject. Karen shared that this was the reason for the combative behavior in the group home. Mr. Ainsley would become frustrated with Arlene’s behaviors and yell at her, which would “rile” Arlene up. Recently, Karen made the decision to sign Arlene on with hospice due to a dramatic decline in her level of functioning. Mr. Ainsley is not aware of this decision and Karen is unsure of how to tell him.

Furthermore, Mr. Ainsley has been experiencing symptoms of depression for approximately two years. Karen reports that Mr. Ainsley is on Lexapro for depression-related issues but has recently been saying things like "I should just jump out of this car" while in the back seat of a moving vehicle and "I wish I could just take a gun and end this nonsense." However, Karen does not believe these are serious threats.

The staff at Evergreen have not heard Mr. Ainsley make threats like this but do report that Mr. Ainsley appears anxious about leaving the skilled nursing facility and returning to a group home. Mr. Ainsley has never seen a mental health professional due to what Karen states as “his generation’s negative perception of mental health services.”