Module 1: Social Isolation

Experience living alone as a recent widower, struggling with technology, and suffer from loneliness and boredom.

Learning Objectives

- Identify common causes of social isolation in older adults.
- Recognize barriers to successful communication and adjust current practices to improve patient outcomes and promote independence.
- Recognize dangers associated with social isolation and develop strategies to meaningfully connect with at-risk individuals.

Who is Frank?

Frank Lanasa is a 72-year old Caucasian man experiencing grief over the death of his wife, Maggie. Maggie's death has isolated Frank from his children, friends, and suburban community. This social isolation will be complicated by related health issues including diabetes, heart disease, a foot injury, alcohol, poor nutrition.

Discussion Questions

1. How did you feel while embodying Frank?
   a. Why did you feel that way?
2. Why do you think Frank didn't follow up with the doctor?
   a. How does grief further complicate this situation?
   b. Can you think of a strategy to simplify Frank's medication management?
3. What did you notice about Frank's eating habits?
   a. How might this impact an individual with diabetes?
4. Have you cared for someone who is socially isolated (either in their home or a facility)?
   a. What challenges did you face as a caregiver/family member trying to alleviate loneliness and boredom?

People You'll Meet

Kristin is Frank's daughter. She is a busy school teacher and has limited time to chat and visit with her dad.

Patrick is Frank's son who lives out of town. He is busy raising a family of his own and has trouble finding time to visit his dad.

External Resources

Non-Embodied Labs informative links and activities

Module 2: Consequences of Social Isolation

Experience living alone as a recent widower, failed communication attempts with family members, and worsening symptoms of uncontrolled diabetes which result in an emergent health situation.

Learning Objectives

- Identify dangers of uncontrolled diabetes and importance of adhering to medication regimen and treatment plan.
- Find connections between failed communication attempts and negative physical/psychological outcomes.
- Identify opportunities for engagement and integrate meaningful touch-points with socially isolated older adults to alleviate loneliness.

Discussion Questions

1. How did you feel while embodying Frank
   a. Did you notice any physical/emotional changes as the module progressed? If so, what?
2. Why do you think Frank got lost walking to the store?
3. After embodying Frank, what is one thing you plan to change in your care practice or personal life?
4. How were Frank's family, community, and environment ineffective at supporting his efforts to become less isolated?
5. What are some proactive strategies that could be implemented with a socially isolated individual to keep them safe and connected?
   a. How can technology support these efforts?

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People You'll Meet

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Patrick is Frank's son who lives out of town. He is busy raising a family of his own and has trouble finding time to visit his dad.

Penny is Frank's neighbor.

Michelle is a social worker responding to a hotline call.

Module 3: Community Inclusion

Experience living alone as a recent widower, chatting with a social worker about community resources, and successfully using technology to stay connected with family.

Learning Objectives

- Identify opportunities for meaningful engagement and promote independence while ensuring medical and safety needs are met.
- Recognize the value in personalizing treatment plans to support individual's preferences and strengths.
- Connect isolated older adults with community resources and/or refer a social worker to facilitate connections and empower them to age in place.

Discussion Questions

1. How did you feel when the social worker arrived at your house?
   a. Why do you think some people are resistive to speaking with community support personnel?
2. What benefits might you get from engaging in intergenerational activities?
   a. Does your facility/community have intergenerational opportunities?
      i. Are they successful and engaging for both young and older participants?
3. Aside from delivering food, what safety benefit does Meals on Wheels offer?
   a. Why might this be important for someone who is socially isolated?
4. Is social isolation an individual or community issue?
   a. Why do you feel this way?

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Penny is Frank's neighbor.

Michelle is a social worker responding to a hotline call.

Joseph is a young man from Frank's church.