

Chapter 18

Rob: Blindness, Insulin-Dependent Diabetes Mellitus

Rob is an 83-year-old Caucasian man with a diagnosis of glaucoma, non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus, gout, and hypertension. He is blind due to the glaucoma. He has been living in a skilled nursing facility for 1 month and has been having a difficult time adjusting to the new environment.

Prior to his admission to the skilled nursing facility, he had been living alone in his own house with services of a home health aide (HHA), homemaker, Meals on Wheels, and weekly nursing visits to monitor his insulin levels and blood pressure. He has been widowed for 6 years. A neighbor was also helping him with meals on the weekends and errands, as well with companionship. However, she was hospitalized herself and is no longer able to assist Rob, given that her assistance was one of the reasons Rob had been able to stay at home so long. Rob has a son, but they are not close and he is not available to help; therefore, placement was sought in a nearby skilled nursing facility.

Rob is a retired factory foreman. He has been retired for 18 years and has lived on Social Security and a small pension plan. Rob lost his vision gradually due to glaucoma. He knows his way around his home and had been able to remain there because of the services and the familiar environment. Rob is fiercely independent and is not happy about having to go into a skilled nursing facility. He uses talking books and listens to the TV. He enjoys going out for walks with his HHA in the nice weather.

In the skilled nursing facility, Rob has been having a difficult time adjusting to the loss of independence and to the institutional routines. A referral was made to OT by Rob's physician to assess his ability to be more independent in ADLs, mobility around the facility, and to work on leisure skills. He is being seen only by occupational therapy.

Occupational Therapy Evaluation

Rob has no observable deficits in his cognition or hearing. Sensation is impaired in his hands for hot/cold, sharp/dull, and light touch. He is blind due to the glaucoma, but can detect shadows and differences in light levels (bright light versus low light). He can recognize familiar people by their footsteps and voices.

Rob's AROM is WFL for his age with strength at the 4/5 bilaterally. He suffers from frequent onsets of gout in his left great toe which are extremely painful and leave him unable to get around without a wheelchair. He is left-handed and has no significant deficits in gross-motor coordination, but due to the sensory deficits in his hands, he has difficulty manipulating small objects, including buttons, pant zippers, and shoelaces. Except when he is experiencing an episode of gout, he does not have any pain.

Rob is able to move from supine to sit, sit to supine, and from sit to stand independently. He ambulates without any assistive device, but bumps into objects in his room and the environment outside his room. He is unable to find his own room if he is in the hallway. He spends a lot of time standing in the doorway to his room and talks to people who come by, but he is very reluctant to leave the room itself. Rob shares his room with one other gentleman who has Alzheimer's disease.

Rob requires setup for washing at the sink in the bathroom and for dressing because he has trouble finding his supplies and clothing. The staff never put things back in the same place. He has difficulty with the buttons on his shirts and with the zipper on his pants, and needs someone to tie his shoelaces for him.