

Transcript Topic 2

Caring for Aboriginal people with life-limiting illnesses

Tom's story



Tom's story 2 min 16 sec

Cec (Tom's wife): Tom, Tom the ambulance is coming to take you to hospital!

Jimmy (son): Mum, mum what happened?

Cec: He couldn't sleep, he was hot and sweaty, couldn't keep still, he got up to go to the toilet.

I heard a crash. He just fell.

Jimmy: Dad, dad you okay old mate?

Tom: Yeh! Yeh, I'm alright!

Jimmy: Okay, okay everything's fine dad. The ambulance is coming, we're all here.

[In hospital]

Sarah (Nurse): Hi Tom, what have you been up to then? Having a bit of excitement to start your day?

What happened this morning Tom?

Tom: I was on the way to the toilet and next thing I knew I was on the floor. Felt I couldn't get my breath.

Sarah: You must've both got a fright. What happened just before you fell?

Tom: Not sure, just remember being on the floor.

Sarah: That's okay Tom, we'll have a look at everything and see if we can find out what's going on.

You've been coming to the hospital for some time now, haven't you? How long's it been?

Cec: Yeh, it's been a while now hey, over a year now.

Sarah: What's your biggest worry at the moment?

Tom: I'm okay really. I've got the family coming around to help Cec, which is a good thing.

Sarah: Tom, I can see a difference in you since we saw you last and I can see that you're in pain and that you seem to be having trouble breathing. Tom I'd like to talk to you about some medications we

can use to help manage your pain and breathing. How would you feel about having a chat about that? Perhaps there's someone else you'd like to be here while we talk about these things? Or I can ask Nancy our Aboriginal liaison officer to come in? [Tom nods] Okay Tom, I'll let you rest now and I'll come back in a little while. Here's your call button, I'm just going to put it right there, if you need me just call, just press it okay. Alright, I'll be back soon.

Acknowledging specific needs 1 min 34 sec

Sarah: Tom's back in with us following a collapse this morning. I started admitting him, but he just wasn't comfortable talking to me about this last episode. Actually I felt really uncomfortable and I didn't really know what to say.

Nancy (Aboriginal liaison officer):
What's the biggest concern about Tom at the moment?

Sarah: He's in a lot of pain, and he's having trouble breathing. I mentioned that I'd like to try some tablets to try and help manage his symptoms but he just stopped engaging with me. I don't know why?

Nancy: Well he's probably worried about a lot of things at the moment. I think first and foremost we need to let him settle in with the family and he's also likely to be sensing something is really different this time.

Sarah: Absolutely, it's been documented that his condition has been deteriorating by his team.

They've also mentioned that his prognosis is very poor. That has also been discussed with his family.

Nancy: And I'm sure Tom and his family are really aware of that.

Nurse: Absolutely, he has definitely deteriorated since I saw him last. I'm really worried about his symptoms; they need to be managed properly.

Nancy: Yes, we do need to be mindful though that Tom may want to use a traditional healer or he may want to use some traditional medicines.

Sarah: Oh okay, I don't really know much about that so what would I need to do to arrange for that to happen.

Nancy: Importantly we need to take the cues from the family first. They may already be dealing with some traditional medicine or some healers. If not though we can always contact the local Aboriginal medical service and see if they're dealing with any traditional healers at the moment, but importantly we need to take the cues from the family first.

Sarah: Yes.

Nancy: Should we go and see him?

Communicating with Tom's family 3 min 28 sec

Nancy: Hey Tom, good to see you. How you doing Cec? Good to see you Jimmy. You been alright Uncle, you been up to country lately?

Tom: We was up there a month or two ago, that right Cec, yeh.

Cec: Yeh, about that.

Nancy: How's all the mob?

Tom: They're all good.

Nancy: Now Uncle, I hear that you've been talking to Sarah the nurse and she's told me that you're in a little bit of pain, and that you're breathless.

Tom: Yeh, I don't want them to put me on that morphine. Remember Cec when they gave it to Aunty Joyce. That morphine, made her real drowsy. She couldn't even speak and then she died the next day.

I'm not staying here, we can manage at home. Anyway I want to see Uncle Joe!

Jimmy: Yeh that's okay Dad, I'll talk to Uncle Joe. I'll get him to come have a yarn, okay. But let's listen to what Sarah has to say first hey.

Sarah: Tom it's understandable that your experience with Aunty Joyce would make you cautious about morphine. We would use a small amount to help manage your pain and breathing without making you drowsy. From what you're saying, it's really important for you to be awake and not drowsy, is that right?

Tom: Yep, not drowsy. I want to be awake so I can have a yarn with everybody, keep in control.

That's what this is all about isn't it?

Sarah: Let me look at this brochure with you, it's good. It tells you all about morphine and how it might help you. It helps explain the medical jargon. Let's go through it together. Fades out

Okay so Tom does that make a little more sense now about why we're wanting to use morphine to help control your pain and breathing? Why don't you have a yarn with your family? I'll have a chat with the doctors now. I'll come back and we can talk about anything that you need to.

Jimmy: Hey Sarah, I'll start tracking down Uncle Joe.

Sarah: Who's Uncle Joe?

Jimmy: Uncle Joe is an elder back in country; he's what you call our traditional healer. It's really important that he's part of all the decisions that are made.

Sarah: Does he need to come down here, or can we get him on the phone?

Jimmy: Oh, I can get him on the phone.

Sarah: Okay well I can try and set up a family meeting via teleconference. Would that be okay?

Jimmy: Yeh, no worries. Thanks Sarah.

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Communicating with Tom's family 3 min 28 sec *continued*

Sarah: Jimmy I was wondering if you'd like us to move your dad into a single room, up near the entrance of the ward. There's a big area there where your whole family can wait and probably visit your dad in larger numbers than just the usual two visitors at a time policy.

Jimmy: Sounds great, thank you.

Sarah: Okay, is there anything else that you need right now?

Jimmy: Dad knows that he's not going to make it back to country to die. I really do think he needs to share his stories with the folks back home. I think he really needs to say his final goodbyes, it's really important.