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Health Ethics
Network

Adult Assessment

Easier Said Than Done: Assessing Capacity for
Informed Choice



Scenario

- Mr. Seabrook has stage 2 prostate cancer, detected during an annual checkup by his family physician.
- He was referred to an oncologist. He responded to each treatment option with, “Ok –sounds fine!” and when asked for his choice says, “Whatever you think is best for me.”
- Treatment options were (1) watchful waiting, (2) surgery, and (3) radiation therapy.
- Mr. Seabrook is a well-educated professional. The oncologist suspects possible mild cognitive impairment and requests a capacity assessment before proceeding.

ASSESSMENT



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Poll

- **Based on what you've seen, do you think Mr. Seabrook has capacity to make this decision at this time?**

A. Yes

B. Yes, with supports

C. No



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Discussion

- **How did you approach the conversation?**
- **What were you responding to in the conversation?**

Elements of consent

- **Evidence a choice**
- **Factual understanding**
- **Reasoning**
- **Appreciation**

Factors for Consent to Treatment

- **Benefits and risks of treatment**
- **Understanding of illness**
- **Understanding of treatment**
- **Appreciation of risks and benefits**
- **Mental status**