



Nova Scotia
Health Ethics
Network

Discussion and Reflection

Easier Said Than Done: Assessing Capacity for
Informed Choice



Panelists

- **Rebecca Greenberg, RN, Ph.D.**
- **Janet Cochran, MSW**
- **Daniel Carver, MD**

Discussion Questions

- **Based on your experience, what would you identify as significant ethical challenges in assessing capacity?**
- **What has helped you address ethical challenges regarding capacity assessment?**

Case - Actors

- **Jeanne Francis – A 72 year old woman living independently in the community who is in the ED for the second time this month due to falls. This time she has been diagnosed with a broken rib.**
- **Helene Pictou – Jeanne’s youngest daughter, who provides support for Jeanne while also running a farm with her partner and raising two children. Helene has done most of the talking this visit.**
- **Rita George – A NP in the ED who has been working with Jeanne and Helene during this admission**

Case

- **Rita is preparing to discharge Jeanne, but Helene pulls her aside and says that she doesn't feel that Jeanne is safe at home and that she doesn't think that Jeanne can make decisions for herself anymore.**
- **Rita replies that Jeanne seems a bit confused in the ED, but that that's a common reaction to the situation.**

Case

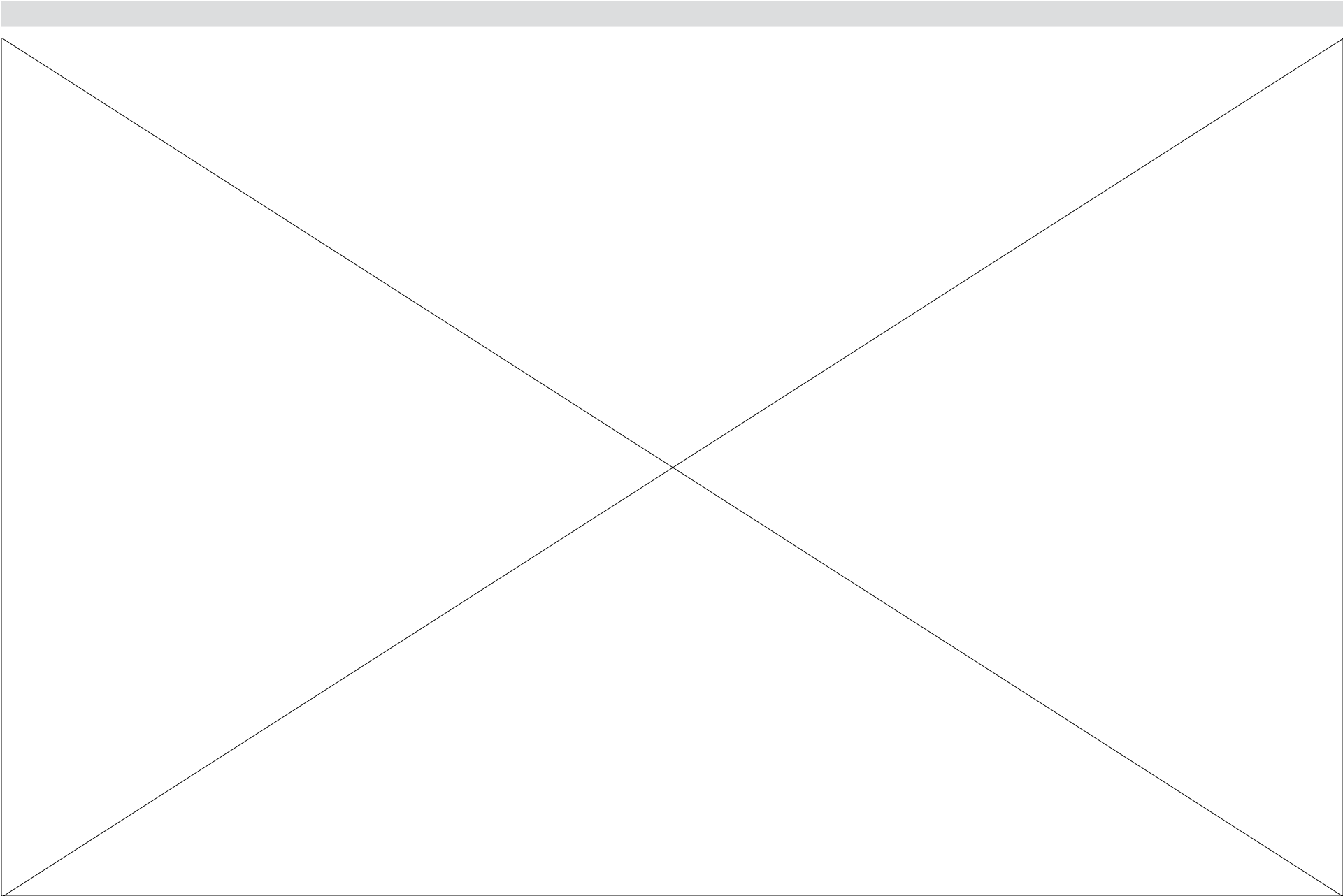
- **Helene says that Jeanne sometimes seems okay, especially during medical appointments, but that she's been making mistakes with money lately, using \$50 bills instead of \$5 bills, and seems more frequently confused and frustrated by things like the remote for her TV.**
- **Helene reports that the family thinks it's time to look at continuing care, but Jeanne won't talk about it.**

Case – The Request

- **Helene asks Rita to keep Jeanne in hospital and to do a capacity assessment so that they can put Jeanne on the wait list for continuing care placement.**

Poll

- **How would you proceed?**
 - A. Refer for capacity assessment**
 - B. Arrange for a family meeting**
 - C. Refer to the Seniors Mental Health Team**
 - D. Call for an ethics consult**



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Response to Case

- **What do you see as the main challenges in the case as presented?**

- **If Rita approached you in the hallway or grocery store asking for help, how would you respond?**

Reflections from Audience