

Case Study 4: N.J.

Scenario

N.J. is a 65-year-old widow who lives alone. She has a long history of type 2 diabetes and hypertension. N.J. is not employed. She has very limited savings and relies on Social Security benefits for income. She smokes about half a pack of cigarettes a day and has been a smoker since she was in her 20s. She drinks alcohol “a couple of times a year, usually a glass of wine at a special dinner.”

N.J. has a sore on her ankle that she has noticed for the last several months. The sore does not hurt much, but she has been unable to get it to heal. The cashier at the convenience store tells her that she should use butter to help heal wounds because the butter keeps the wound moist and helps to enhance healing.

N.J. decides to follow the cashier's advice and applies butter to her wound for a week. The wound does not seem to be getting any better; in fact, it looks worse. It now has yellowish drainage, and the skin around the wound has become red. Her foot also hurts when she walks on it. N.J. stops the butter treatment and goes to the emergency department.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the priority nursing diagnoses for N.J.?
infection control and lack of understanding of disease process.
2. What discharge teaching will you provide her?
contact provider for any new or worsening wounds. Since diabetes inhibits her immune response, any new wounds need to be treated early and aggressively to prevent infection.
3. How can you advocate for N.J. regarding required medical equipment, supplies, and medications and their cost on a limited budget?
have social worker or case manager look for programs for elderly diabetics that help with cost reduction for these items (pharmacy coupon programs etc). Contact local diabetes educators for resources, contact ADA for resources as well
4. What expectation would you anticipate for N.J. regarding follow-up care?
Possibly admit for IV antibiotics and wound debridement and care.
have patient come in for clinic checks of foot to ensure proper healing, or at least not getting worse.
educate NJ on safe foot care to prevent future wounds and infections, including how to care for skin and nails, as well as selecting proper shoes.