

A day in the life of a memory doctor

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It's first thing and I'm at the care homes meeting where we go over all the new care home referrals and discuss any service users we're concerned about. At the meeting is nursing staff, doctors, occupational therapists and a psychologist.

There's time for a cup of tea and a biscuit (if I'm lucky!)

I head off to the Memory Team meeting where we talk about all the new referrals and the new people we've assessed. It's a great chance to discuss the services users openly and learn from other team members as we all have our own specific skill sets and expertise.

Time for a quick lunch before the home visits start.

My first home visit is to a gentleman who's having with memory problems and his wife has joined us for the assessment. I can see he's nervous, so I get him talking about his keen interest in golf - his passion for the sport was obvious when I spotted his golf clubs in the hallway! We then talk about his difficulties with his memory and how he's been managing. I ask his wife about her concerns and observations of her husband and we do a memory test. We put a plan in place and I arrange to see this lovely gentleman in six weeks' time. In the meantime, I arrange for him to have a CT scan of his head. I can see that they're both anxious about the outcome of the assessments, so I offer reassurance and guidance on the support services available in the community. I also leave the number for the Community Team in case either of them have any questions or concerns.

My next visit is to a 90-year-old lady with a diagnosis of dementia who lives in a care home. I've been asked to visit her as the care home staff are concerned that she's getting more confused and agitated. I talk to the staff who give me a great insight and they explain their concerns. I go to see the lady and her daughter is with her. It's always important to speak to carers and family members as it really helps to get an overview of the individual and the current concerns from the people who know them best. She was sat in the lounge working on what seemed like a difficult jigsaw. I gently ask to speak with her and at first, she wasn't keen, but I join in with the jigsaw and we get chatting. I go through a memory test with her, but I could sense she didn't want me to stay too long so I leave after finishing the test. Unfortunately, I can see that her dementia has progressed. I plan for one of our nursing staff to work with her to develop strategies to help with relaxation and reducing distress. I arrange to see her again in four weeks' time.

I spend an hour ringing back any service users or family members who have contacted the Community Team with any questions and concerns.

The last hour of my working day is spent completing letters, ringing GPs and arranging appointments. It's been a long day, but I'm pleased to have completed most of the tasks on my list. More importantly, I've enjoyed meeting different characters throughout the day and I feel that I've been able to help those people and their loved ones in their time of need.

