Case study

Judy



Judy is an 81-year-old woman living in an aged residential care facility.

Reason for palliative care

Judy moved into the facility about six months ago, when she could no longer manage at home on her own. She was diagnosed with breast cancer five years ago and recently her disease has progressed with metastases to her liver and bones (right hip).

Loss of interest in activities

When Judy first came to the facility, she participated in all of the activities, including an exercise class and craft sessions. Lately she has been keeping more to herself and is spending more time in her room. She used to have a great sense of humour and loved sharing a joke with other residents and staff, but you have noticed that now she is much more withdrawn.

Family and community

Judy is a widow – her husband Jim died about 10 years ago. Her son lives in Australia and visits once or twice a year. She has a daughter who lives locally, but she and her husband are very busy running a business, so her visits are often brief. Judy used to attend mass on a Sunday with a volunteer from the local church, who would bring her to the service. She stopped attending services about a month ago. She has also stopped going on the weekly shopping trip organised by the ARC facility.

Pain

Judy has had an ongoing dull ache in the right hip area for some time. This morning when you bring in her breakfast she tells you that she has had a terrible night's sleep. She cannot lie on her right side and struggles to get comfortable. Using a wheat bag helps at times but it gets cold quickly and she doesn't like to bother the busy nurses. Judy takes regular Panadol but finds it less effective than it used to be. During the day, she sits in her reclining armchair. This is when her pain is at its best, scoring 4/10. You notice her grimacing when she moves from lying down to sitting on the side of the bed. When you observe her mobilising, you see her grimacing as she stands up and steps onto her right leg. She describes the pain in her right leg as shooting pain. She mobilises slowly and with difficulty, stating her pain score when mobilising is 8/10. During her shower, you notice she is very tender when you wash her back. When you ask about her lower back, she responds that she started to feel pain there a few days ago. Judy shares with you that she is worried that the increased pain means that the cancer in her hip is getting worse and feels that 'It is really beginning to get me down now'.