

CASE STUDY OF AFONSO GONZALES

Afonso, who prefers to just be called Al, is a 57 year old widower whose wife died 2 years ago from breast cancer. Maria was the love of Al's life and he dearly misses her. Al came to Canada as a youngster with his parents Adriana and Juan from Portugal. Al struggled as a child and youth to leave his birth culture behind and become more Canadian. He took up smoking as a teenager to fit in with the macho boys groups. But his parents insisted that he fit into Portuguese traditions and celebrations. To them family was very important. These pressures caused him difficulties with learning in school but in time he did succeed in completing his secondary schooling. A family friend then invited Al to apprentice with him as a bricklayer. He enjoyed the work with his hands and continued to work in this role. When he was only 19th years old he met Maria at a local Portuguese event, his parents were delighted. Their courtship was short and they married and within 2 years of their marriage they had a son Matthew who is now 25 years old. Following Maria's death at the age of 50 Al became very depressed and mourned her loss in his life. He did not take the same level of care as normal with his work and over time he started noticing increasing pain in his right knee. He had always prided himself on his physical abilities and strength and this new problem just made his depression worse. He went to his doctor about his knee and back pain because it was starting to interfere with his ability to work. He told the doctor that carrying heavy bricks over the years was finally catching up with him. As the doctor questioned him he also uncovered that his hands were often as painful as was his back and knees. Over the past year Al mentioned that he had to stay home from work on an increasing number of days because the pain was too great. He also told his doctor that he didn't want to bother the doctor so he hadn't come in for a long time. This past week his employer mentioned his concern about his growing absence from the job, and informed Al that he needed to get this under control. So reluctantly Al had to admit he needs professional help and made an appointment to see his doctor. When he arrived for his

appointment a nurse took him into an office and checked his blood pressure, pulse and weight and asked him why he wanted help from them.

Al explained his story to her. It felt good to get it off his 'chest'. He realized that his growing pain and feelings of being down were really bringing him down too. The nurse commented on his blood pressure reading of 180/100 and asked if he was aware of it being high? He was surprised and said no, he was always very healthy. She also commented on his weight at 160 pounds and asked for his height. He told her with pride that his height was 5 ft. 10 inches and his weight is within normal for his age and height. He also told her he has strong muscles in his arms and legs from all his outdoor bricklaying work. She then explored with him about his diet. Al felt guilty because his eating lately since Maria died has been less nutritious and often he just gets some fast food on the way home from work. He really doesn't like cooking – Maria was the cook in the family!

The nurse explored if Al had many friends who might invite him for dinner from time to time. Al said he was kind of a loner and liked to keep to himself. He loved watching Hockey, football, and soccer on the TV and this really was his entertainment. When asked about his exercise program he commented his job gave him all the exercise he needed. The nurse suggested that he might want to meet with the clinic dietitian who might be able to help him with some simple meals that were nutritious that Al could make for himself. Al said he would consider this. The nurse also explored about whether he smoked. He told her that he was one of those addicted guys to cigarettes and consumer around 1.5 packs a day. He said his smoking seemed to help make him feel better following Maria's death.

The nurse asked about any children. Al mentioned Matthew but commented that he didn't see him much he refused to finish his schooling and drinks too much beer. He hangs around with a crowd of drinkers and womanizers, according to Al but does work part-time as a shelf stocker with the local Costco. He lives on his own. The nurse then informed Al that the doctor would be in soon to see him.

His doctor reviewed the notes made by the nurse about his hypertension, weight and pain as well as his history of smoking and potential depression. His doctor explored about his family's history and discovered that his father died of lung cancer and his mother died following a stroke. Both parents also had Type II Diabetes. Given this family history the doctor decided to carry out a battery of tests on Al. In the meantime he ordered : Acetaminophen (Tylenol Arthritis) 650 mg. three times a day)to help control the pain and Venlafaxine XL (Effexor) (SNRI) 225 mg. daily to help with his depression. He also asked Al if he was taking any over the counter drugs? Al said he has always taken a Garlic tablet once a day to keep healthy. He asked the doctor about taking Glucosamine and Chondroitin as he heard it was good for helping with joint pain? The doctor suggested he try it and that he should take at least 1500 mg. a day. He suggested that if the medications did not help that Al may need to have surgery on his knee. But suggested that they wait and see how he managed with this new regime. He told Al he would do some fasting tests about his blood glucose and also check his cholesterol level as well as for Arthritis. He suggested that Al go to the lab on the main floor of the same building in the morning or the blood work to get the results as soon as possible and then return in a few days to discuss the results.

Al followed his advice and came back in 4 days later. The doctor informed Al that he did have beginning Type II Diabetes that would need to be controlled through, diet, exercise, and medication. He told Al he would order him on Metformin (Glucophage) 500 mg. twice daily and asked Al about his medical coverage. Al told him that he only received coverage through his government card because his employer did not provide any further health insurance. His doctor suggested that Al meet with both the clinic dietitian to help him plan his diet and exercise program to control his diabetes and also their social worker to find ways to cover the costs of his medications and equipment to manage his diabetes. He also informed Al that his cholesterol was high and would like him to take Atorvastatis 40 mg. daily. But it was costly and he would ask the social worker to see if she could find coverage for its purchase for Al. Al felt overwhelmed he came in with just wanting help with his knee and suddenly it seems unimportant to

the doctor. He didn't even discuss it with him and he realized the doctor was gone. All Al had was some prescriptions and assurances that meetings with the Dietitian and social worker would be set up by the office receptionist. Al didn't know whether he was happy about all this attention. It was going to totally change his life around. How would he manage all these changes? And would these be sufficient to allow him to continue to work?