

3.17 Care of People with Metabolic Problems

Sylvia is on the phone for her thyroid test results. She is 64.

Elicit: Sylvia could I just check your date of birth please?

Sylvia: 12.04.54

Elicit: Perfect. You saw Dr Walker last week. What did you and she think these blood tests might show?

Sylvia: Well I've been feeling really tired and cold, constipated and I've been putting weight on. Dr Walker thought that I might have an under-active thyroid.

Provide: Your blood tests confirm that you have an under-active thyroid gland.

Elicit: What does that mean to you?

Sylvia: My aunt had the same problem and had to take tablets everyday. But I don't really know any more than that.

Provide: You have a gland in your neck that normally produces thyroxine. Thyroxine keeps your body functioning at the right pace. When you don't produce enough thyroxine your heart, bowels and your general metabolism slow down. This is why you've been feeling cold, are constipated and have gained weight recently.

Elicit: Does that make sense?

Sylvia: So thyroxine is like a thermostat?

Provide: Yes, exactly. I would like to start you on some thyroxine today. This is almost certainly going to be a lifelong treatment, but we will need to keep an eye on your blood levels of thyroxine every now and then.

Elicit: Would that be OK?

Sylvia: Sure.

Elicit: Please could you arrange a blood test in 4 to 6 weeks from now and get in touch with me about the results a week later?

Sylvia: OK.

Provide: You should stop gaining weight but you won't automatically lose the extra weight without some attention to your diet and exercise levels.

Elicit: Would you like some more information about under active thyroids?

Sylvia: No thanks, I'll look it up on my ipad.