

Martin Wheeler Case—Interdisciplinary Case Management Experience (ICME)

Mr. Martin Wheeler is a 58-year-old man who was diagnosed last week with Stage 4 metastatic non-small cell lung cancer. He had been having trouble with his vision and went to see an ophthalmologist, who found a tumor in his eye as the cause for the decreased vision. Imaging and biopsies confirmed that lung cancer was the primary cancer, and that it had spread to his bones, liver, adrenal glands, and left eye. He is being evaluated in the interdisciplinary cancer care clinic, preparing for radiation to his left eye to try to slow the progression of his vision loss. He has been told that his cancer is not curable, and that chemotherapy may slow the progression but the response with this type of cancer is unpredictable and the side effects of the radiation and chemotherapy are anticipated to be substantial. Mr. Wheeler is an insulin-dependent diabetic who admits to being non-compliant with glucose monitoring and related medication administration.

Mr. Wheeler is a restaurant and catering manager in one of the city's largest hotels. He has been married to his second wife (Judy) for fourteen years, and his two children from his first marriage attend a college (Jennifer) and a nursing school (Amanda) within driving distance. His first wife (Kathy) died 15 years ago following an overdose of sleeping pills less than one year after their divorce was final, and he is the children's sole financial supporter. He is worried about financial stability for his wife and children, as he had not planned to retire for many years due to college expenses and lack of sufficient savings. In addition to worrying about loss of income related to a medical leave, he will lose his job-related health insurance and transition to expensive COBRA payments if he's off for a significant period of time. He is unsure what the insurance change might entail, or if he will still have access to care for his cancer.

Mr. Martin Wheeler is an active member of an Evangelical Charismatic Church called Christian Fellowship. Shortly after his divorce and the death of his first wife, he began attending a grief support group held at the church. He found the people to be friendly so he soon began attending church services there. After about a month, Martin had a conversion experience and found good support and a sense of forgiveness. He also met a wonderful woman named Judy, who was a lifelong member of CF and a year later, they were married. Mr. Wheeler feels guilty about many things in his life, including the death of his first wife, but being connected with all of the loving people at the church helps him cope with these feelings, although they still creep in from time to time. Now that he is diagnosed with "incurable cancer", he is wrestling with his faith. His pastor often preaches that if you have enough faith, God will provide and that miracles and healings of the physical body are possible if you only believe. His wife and other members of his church fully expect a miracle, so he is concerned that by accepting Palliative Care and his given prognosis, he will demonstrate a lack of faith. His wife believes, for example, that if his heart or lungs fail, he should be resuscitated, even if that means being put on a ventilator. God may use that extra time to show the doctors how powerful He is and when Martin is fully restored to health, he will be a living testimony to all whom he meets.