

Too quick to prescribe

I am the medical power of attorney of my 91-year-old mother, who lives in an aged-care facility. She was recently reviewed by a psychogeriatrician, who prescribed a new drug to slow down the progression of Mum's dementia, despite the fact her dementia is progressing slowly without this drug. Instead, I prescribed lifestyle intervention, such as outings and conversation, to improve Mum's quality of life.

Another doctor was concerned my mother was taking a diuretic without a potassium supplement. I explained that she ate several bananas a week, because they are her favourite fruit. Surely, this is preferable to taking a drug.

Last Saturday, my mother had a fall. The doctor was sure she had not fractured her ribs, but still ordered an X-ray. The only treatment for a fractured rib is rest and analgesia. I cancelled the X-ray and instead prescribed trips to the park in a wheelchair and The Age crossword. With burgeoning healthcare costs, I call on all medical doctors to ask: is that drug or medical test really necessary?

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