Ethical and Legal Issues in Geriatric Psychiatry


The presence of a psychiatric diagnosis does not necessarily indicate lack of decisional capacity.

Does your older patient have the cognitive ability to manage his or her own life? Can he pay his bills? Can she safely drive a car?
In this video, Rajesh Tampi, MD, outlines key steps involved in a thorough and thoughtful capacity evaluation.
Dr Tampi is Associate Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine in New Haven, Conn, and Director of Masonicare Behavioral Health Services in Wallingford, Conn. He and his colleagues discussed capacity evaluation as part of a workshop on ethics in geriatric psychiatry at the APA meeting in San Francisco.

Take-home points:
1. Ethical principles: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice
2. Decisional capacity evaluation is time-limited and situation-specific
3. The presence of a psychiatric diagnosis does not necessarily indicate lack of decisional capacity

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