Raising concerns with staff

Useful words when a sudden change has been missed or dismissed

You know what the person is usually like. Delirium is often missed, especially when someone becomes quiet or sleepy. Raising a concern is not complaining. It may give staff the information they need to recognise a sudden change.

Three things to say

1. Describe the change from normal, with times and examples. "On Sunday she was doing the crossword; today she can't follow a sentence."
2. Use the word delirium, so staff know what assessment you are asking for.
3. Ask a direct question. "Could a clinician assess him for delirium now?"

Put it together

> **"Dad is not himself. Yesterday he was chatting and joking; today he keeps asking where he is, and he is too drowsy to finish a meal. This came on quickly. I think it could be delirium. Could a clinician assess him now?"**

Staff may use a short bedside assessment, such as the 4AT or another tool used locally. If nothing seems to be happening, ask: "Could someone assess them for delirium now?"

Keep a short note with dates and times: "Tuesday, 6 pm: thought I was her sister. Wednesday, 9 pm: trying to pack." Your notes can help staff see how the symptoms change over time.

If the change is explained as dementia or age

> **"I know she has dementia, but this is different. Her dementia changes slowly. This happened between Tuesday and Thursday, and she is seeing cats that are not there. Could this be delirium on top of dementia?"**

> **"Being 88 does not explain becoming this confused in two days. Last week he was doing his own shopping. I would like him assessed for delirium."**

If you are not being heard

- Explain again what worries you and when the changes happened.
- Ask for the nurse in charge, a senior doctor or nurse, or the senior staff member responsible for the person's care.
- Ask for your concern and the response to be written in the health record.

Report unusual sleepiness urgently. If the person is hard to wake or barely responds, ask a doctor or nurse to check them as an emergency. At home or elsewhere outside a care setting, phone the local emergency number now for delirium (acute confusion).

Keep asking for help if you are still worried.

Read more: https://deliriumsupport.com/raising-concerns/

Read more online