



CASE STUDY - EMMI

Mrs Jarvis is 75 years old. She appears very tense and has been quite snappy with the staff. She has a tiny Yorkshire terrier called 'Emmi', only 18 months old, which has a congenital heart defect and is very seriously ill and has been an In-Patient for several days. Emmi was the runt of the litter from an unregistered breeder and has been sick for most of her life.

Mrs Jarvis is well known at the surgery because she is devoted to her pets. She also has a parrot and a three-legged rescue cat. Mrs Jarvis got Emmi for comfort when her son, who is serving in the RAF, was posted to Afghanistan.

Mrs Jarvis has heard the bad news from, the Vet, who did everything possible to be compassionate in breaking the bad news and explaining the condition. She had about a week to think about it before things took a turn for the worst.

Mrs Jarvis walked about a mile home after her consultation, having made the decision. She was going back at the end of morning surgery. She wanted to be composed so returned, wearing black and carrying a beautiful handmade baby shawl in which to wrap her dog after euthanasia, intending to light some candles and then bury her in the garden.

Mrs Jarvis was very tearful, sobbing while saying goodbye to Emmi. She was able to compose herself so she could be present for the euthanasia. Afterwards, she spent some time cradling her dog in the consulting room, almost unable to speak through her tears.

Mrs Jarvis has had a dreadful week, has hardly slept or been able to eat, while her dog was so seriously ill. She was too upset to tell her son. She has somewhat unrealistic ideas about many things, and in this case, she clung to the hope that Emmi could be cured. She is a very religious lady and has been praying for her beloved pet. She is extremely distraught at the death of Emmi. As she is leaving the surgery carrying Emmi's body in the shawl and a basket, she complains of severe chest pain and looks very pale and grey.



- 1) What are the complicating factors in this bereavement which influence the vulnerability of the owner?
- 2) How might you, in your role, help Mrs Jarvis with her bereavement?
- 3) Is there anything that could be done to improve on this euthanasia?
- 4) What options could be offered, in this case, for after-life body care?