

Raj's story

- Raj looks after his 19 year old son who has bipolar disorder
- Raj has recently had problems with severe eczema and has a GP appointment
- He has been up all night because his son has been behaving erratically
- He has left his son with a neighbour who, after much persuading, has agreed to stay with him.

My son has never been the same since my wife died. I am completely shattered after another terrible night trying to calm him down. He insisted on taking repeated cold showers – kept saying he was hot. I'm sure he is not taking his medication properly although he tells me he is. I am at a loss as to know how to manage his behaviour when he is like this.

I've got to get this eczema under control – I don't suppose the stress is helping at all. What triggered it all was when I found out that he had been given one of those wretched store cards and had run up a massive bill. There is no way I can pay it – I just lie awake worrying about it.

I was late for my appointment at the health centre this morning because I couldn't leave my son on his own and it took some persuading to get my neighbour to sit with him. All our friends seem to have run a mile since he was diagnosed. When I eventually got to the health centre there was no where to park, which made me even later. The receptionist said I would have to make another appointment for another day – eventually I managed to persuade her to let me stay until the doctor could fit me in but I ended up waiting nearly an hour.

After all that I only saw the doctor for a couple of minutes – a quick glance and then a prescription for some cream. I would have liked to have talked to him about how totally worn down and depressed I am feeling but I didn't feel I should trouble him. Thinking about it, I should have spoken to him about ways to cope with my son – guess he would have said it was confidential anyway.

To cap it all when I went to the pharmacy there was a massive queue and I had to wait another half an hour to get the prescription. There was no signal on my mobile so couldn't let the neighbour know what was going on. So don't suppose she will help again – she was pretty angry with me when I got back...

Raj's story questions:

1. why is Raj so depressed?

2. what measures could the practice have put in place to identify Raj as a carer?

3. what might have helped Raj to gain better access to the services at the practice?

4. how could the practice have supported Raj as key partner in his son's care?

5. how could I, or my practice, support carers in a more effective and sensitive way?
