

ICF Case Study and Class Exercises

ICF Case Study

Karen Smith is a 74-year-old woman living in Kansas City, Missouri. She suffered a stroke (cerebrovascular accident) several months ago in her family home. As a result, Karen experienced paralysis in her right arm, severe weakness in her legs, and impaired speech. At this time, she must use a manual wheelchair due to her difficulties in walking; and she cannot climb stairs. Since her bedroom is located on the second floor, Karen sleeps on the sofa in the living room. This is actually convenient to the bathroom and to her beloved old-fashioned radio so she can listen throughout the day. Her 87-year-old husband, Ralph, is limited in his ability to care for Karen because he lacks the physical strength to lift or transfer her. Otherwise, he is able to prepare their daily meals, handle household chores, and administer her necessary medications. They both have anxiety about Karen's physical state, and they wish for Karen to remain at home (and not enter an assisted living facility). Medicare has covered some in-home therapy, but it will not pay for assisted living. Ralph has been worried about their options in light of insurance and their personal financial situation (being retired with limited savings). To compound the situation, Ralph overheard his wife crying on the phone to their daughter, Beth, who lives out of state, about being a burden on him. He is now worried about Karen's mental well-being too.

What are some of the health and/or mental health conditions reflected in the case study?

What are some examples of the following relevant ICF categories reflected in the case study?

Body functions and structures

Activities and participation

Environmental and personal factors

ICF Class Exercises

These activities are intended to increase knowledge and skills with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) among students in social work programs. Activities can be used for undergraduate and graduate students.

The ICF power-point presentation and ICF articles can be used to introduce the ICF to students. Additional resources include the ICF Beginner's Guide and the ICF eLearning Tool (available on the WHO ICF Homepage). These resources can be reviewed in the classroom and/or assigned before the class.

Exercise 1: Provide a case study to students in class. Case studies can vary in length and complexity depending on class time allocated for the exercise. Working either individually or in small groups, ask students to develop a list of health and mental health conditions reflected in the case. Students can then identify aspects from the case study that correspond to the main ICF categories: Body Structures and Functions (impairments), Activities and Participation (limitations and restrictions), Environmental and Personal Factors (barriers and facilitators).

Exercise 2: Using a case study, ask students to complete the ICF Checklist (assessment tool). Students can complete the ICF Checklist individually and compare their assessments. Or, students can work in pairs or small groups to complete the exercise. As an additional step in the same class session or subsequent session, students can develop intervention or treatment plans based on their findings from the ICF Checklist. This exercise can be used as a graded assignment outside of the classroom using a more comprehensive case study.

Exercise 3: As a follow-up exercise, update the same case study used in the previous exercise with multiple changes to the individual's health and functioning situation. For example, the individual's health condition can worsen or improve, certain activities may become more difficult, and/or their environment can be altered in negative and/or positive ways. Ask students to use this "second encounter case" to complete the ICF Checklist and then discuss the changes in the categories and codes. Specific intervention(s) can be identified in the follow-up case to allow for a discussion of expected and/or actual outcomes.