

What should you do once catatonia is diagnosed?

Dr. McCall:

Once you've declared someone's in a catatonic state, you are now in a state of urgency. You are in a state of urgency because, as I mentioned, if you don't act quickly, you could get a lung embolus thrown, or you get a bad bed sore and it becomes septic, or you aspirate and develop pneumonia.

It's bad enough to have the misery of watching someone in catatonia, what they're going through, but failure to act could kill them. And it has to be done quickly.

Someone with catatonic stupor, we're hoping we're not going to need ECT. Let's just hope that lorazepam or whatever else we're going to do is sufficient. But while we're discovering that, go ahead and start the ECT process. We may not actually do ECT, but I want you to call the family. I want you to have that discussion. Perhaps you should go ahead and figure out how you're going to get consent.

And of course, that differs in every state. But lay the groundwork to be ready to spring into action, because we may find out four or five days from now that lorazepam or whatever else you're using is not going to make it, it's just not going to be sufficient. And then we go, "Dog gonit, I wish we had started the ECT process four days earlier. We've lost time."

All these things need to be launched simultaneously so you're ready.