

Mr Grimshaw's hobby

You are coming to the end of a busy afternoon in surgery when the receptionist phones through and asks if you would see one last patient. You recognise the name, although you haven't seen him for a while now, and agree. While you are waiting for him to come in, you pull up his notes on your computer to refresh your memory. Yes, that's it – you first saw him about 3 years ago, soon after he'd retired and taken up a new hobby. At that consultation, he'd been complaining of a cough and a shivery chill. You recall that you felt quite pleased with yourself at the time, for asking the right questions and doing the right tests and not just assuming he had flu.

When the data came in and the diagnosis was confirmed, you'd given him some lifestyle advice. You saw him a year later and his declining FVC still hadn't persuaded him to take your advice. You haven't seen him since and just as you are wondering how things turned out, Jack Grimshaw shuffles slowly into your office, breathing as if he had just run a marathon. He drops heavily into a chair. "I just can't get my breath these days doc - I can hardly get up the stairs. Those pills you've been giving me are rubbish – I'm taking twice what you said and look at the state of me – swollen up like a damn balloon and just as breathless as ever! I want you to give me something that works this time or I'm going to see that nice Dr Maha-wotsername next time. I bet she'll sort me out right."

Exhausted by his tirade, he looks at you expectantly. As you reel from the injustice of this, you take a deep breath and, making a supreme effort to keep your tone pleasant and non-judgemental, you ask your first question. "You didn't take my advice to get rid of the birds then?"

What are the tests the GP would have used to make his initial diagnosis?

What are the drugs that he is prescribing?

What changes are happening to Jack's lung function and why?