



Intro

Aduhelm is no ordinary drug, and these are no ordinary medical spots. Mild cognitive impairment forces us to confront our anxieties, our denials, and our shared humanity in a way that few other illnesses can.

As a middle-aged husband and father, I can't help but see myself in each of the stories you've presented. I believe that by depicting ethnically and economically diverse characters in relatable situations, we can reflect our audience and trigger those same niggling doubts which will encourage them to see their behaviour in a new light.

But for the audience to respond, they need to connect. And for them to connect, the spots need to feel truthful. There's no formula for truth in filmmaking. Each of these stories requires an authentic approach which will form organically from the various decisions we make along the way.

Living Portraits

Let's use art direction, locations, and performances, to infuse each scene with the texture of real life. The audience should feel as though they have been dropped into a moment that is unfolding in front of their eyes, allowing them to discover its meaning with each central character.

But these aren't just individual moments. Like any good story, there's a beginning, a middle, and an end. A before and after. These are slices of real-life driven by three-dimensional characters.

Immersion

In cinema, the most immersive shot is the one take. It makes us feel like we're there. We become a participant in the unfolding action of the scene. It holds tension as the story progresses, forcing us to question how the shot will end, and more importantly, what will trigger it. This is a bold departure for this kind of spot, but it will spark intrigue in our audience and instantly connect them to the characters and their stories.

We will construct each vignette as one long take, with the camera moving between the characters, showing us both their external situation, and their internal reaction to what's unfolding in the scene.

The one-take allows us to maximise our time with each character, helping us to connect with them and amplifying their emotional responses.

We will move through the spaces in real-time, negotiating the characters and their world, creating a visceral experience for our audience.

Beyond the visual, sound will also play an important role. Weaving in the natural, diegetic sounds of each space will draw us deeper into the story and help to create a sense of verisimilitude.

I believe this is the most effective way to connect our audience to the story. If they believe in our world, then they will believe in our characters and their struggles.

Our Characters

These aren't your stereotypical 'seniors'. They are active people with rich, exciting, and busy lives. This will be evident in their homes, their wardrobe, and the way they carry themselves.

1. Foggy Brain

Ali (53) is a veteran autoworker who lives alone, but the memory of his late wife still lives on in their family home. His kids have recently signed him up to an online dating site but he's not ready to move on quite yet.

2. Asking The Same Question

ELENA (60) is a mother of two, but she has always been closer to her son, JOSH (35), rather than her daughter, LAURA. Josh does his best to visit Elena once a week but gets frustrated when all they do is talk about Laura.

3. Senior Moment

JANELLE's (55) friends have started talking about retirement, but she has no intention of slowing down. An entrepreneur with her own interior design business, she likes to keep her mind and body active, whether that's visiting the latest art exhibition for new inspiration or running around her block every morning.

4. Losing Your Keys

ESTEBAN (52) often reminds his patronising teenage daughter, ANGELINA (16), that 'just because he's losing his hair, it' doesn't mean that he's losing his marbles.' A former military man, he is somewhat obsessive about keeping things neat and tidy.

5. Your Mum Seems Confused

Janelle - repeat.

6. What Makes A Senior Moment?

GLORIA (54) and her husband, MALCOLM (58), live together with their cat, ERROL. Malcolm may be the man of the house, but Gloria has always been the more confident and capable of the two, and he knows it.

7. Same Story

MATTHEW (57) is a lecturer at the local university, which allows him to combine his two favourite things - history and talking. But while Matthew's students have chosen to be there, his kids couldn't be less interested in hearing about his latest research at home.

8. Losing Train of Thought

TERENCE (50) works long hours as a nurse at the nearby hospital, so when he gets the chance he loves nothing more than bringing his extended family together with food, music, and if he's had enough to drink, some dancing.

The Story

The simplicity of these scenes are what makes them relatable, so we must resist the urge to over-complicate them. Rather, it's about layering textures and adding nuance.

1. Foggy Brain

We're on Ali's face as he steps purposefully into the living room where a television is playing. He stops in the doorway and his face shifts as he tries to recapture the thought he just had while the indistinguishable chatter from the television drowns it out.

Title: Foggy Brain

VO: It's time to get clear about why your brain is foggy.

End titles.

Alternative ideas:

A well-appointed kitchen with an island in the centre. A few family members set the table as we push in on Ali, the greying patriarch of a mixed family who stands at the range in an apron. He looks out at packets of powders and vegetables which litter the counter, utterly lost. As he struggles to remember what comes next in his signature biryani dish his daughter piles on the pressure asking "how long until it's ready?"

Ali is stood at the kitchen counter, stirring a biryani on the hob, when he hears the front door open. Ali steps out into the hallway and smiles on seeing his son cradling his grandson in his arms. Ali's son hands his grandson over to him, but Ali struggles to recall his grandson's name until he is prompted by his concerned son. Ali snaps back, "Yes, I know."

2. Asking The Same Question

A modest kitchen with a radio chattering in the background. We push in on Josh, cradling a freshly brewed tea as he sits at the table listening to his mum, Elena. She asks "did you see Laura today?" "Yes", Josh replies. He takes a sip on the tea, and Elena asks again, 'did you see Laura?'

The radio chatter fades out, isolating Elena's voice. We move in on Josh who is taken aback, forcing a smile as his concern takes hold.

Title: Asking the same questions

VO: It's time to get answers on why your mom keeps asking you the same question.

End titles.

3. Senior Moment

We follow Janelle as she navigates a busy, urban street. A cacophony of car horns and footsteps. The hustle and bustle of the daily grind. Janelle suddenly stops, but the camera keeps going and pans around her as she tries to remember where she was headed.

Title: Senior moment

VO: It's time we know if it's a senior moment or a talk to your doctor moment.

End titles.

4. Losing Your Keys

We're underneath a bed, slowly pushing in on Esteban's feet as he paces up and down the bedroom floor. "I just had them!" he exclaims in frustration. "Don't worry dad, I'll find them", says Angelina. As we near the end of the bed we see the keys - just out of sight. Esteban turns around and strides determinedly out of the room.

Title on screen: Losing your keys

VO: It's time we learned the difference between just losing your keys and losing your keys a little too often.

5. Your Mum Seems Confused

We follow Janelle as she navigates a busy, urban street. A cacophony of car horns and footsteps. The hustle and bustle of the daily grind. Janelle suddenly stops, but the camera keeps going and pans around her as she tries to remember where she was headed.

Title: Your mom seems confused

VO: It's time to get clear on why your mom seems confused.

6. What Makes A Senior Moment?

From the hob we see Gloria sitting at the table eating eggs while Malcolm reads the newspaper. She looks towards the camera, catching sight of something on the hob. The camera booms down, revealing small, blue flames flickering away. Gloria walks over to the hob and quietly turns it off. She glances back at Malcolm, who is none the wiser, but she can't shake her concern.

Title: What makes a senior moment?

VO: It's time we know if it's a senior moment

End titles.

Additional vignettes:

Having considered all six, I feel the vignettes 'same story' and 'losing train of thought' have the greatest emotional potential because they show how MCI affects people interacting

socially. The potential to show the lack of awareness, concern, and shame is ripe with dramatic possibility.

7. Same Story

We track down a long dining table lined with members of a multigenerational family while Matthew sits at the head, passing a plate with carved chicken to his wife. Matthew starts “according to the butcher this chicken-”. His daughter, Eliza interjects, “was fed on a diet of thyme and fennel. “Yeah, you just said.” Matthew smiles, embarrassed.

VO: It’s time to get the full story on why your dad keeps telling you the same story.

8. Losing Your Train of Thought

Terence is stood at the bbq with his father, Chris, while the rest of his family mill around the garden - drinking, dancing, eating. Terence continues “but then the patient’s girlfriend turned up, so that meant that...erm...”. Terence pauses and Chris waits in bated breath, but his anticipation is replaced with concern as Terence struggles to find his thought. “Wait, what was I saying again?”

VO: “It’s time to find out why you’re frequently losing your train of thought.”

Casting

We want people to see themselves in these characters, so we’re looking for subtle, authentic reactions from those experiencing symptoms and reacting to them. To achieve this we’ll need to reach beyond the pool of commercial actors and seek out skilled, but visually interesting actors that our audience can identify with.

In films that contain multiple characters we can complement leads with non-professional actors, or family members, benefiting from those existing dynamics which provide an unspoken, naturalistic texture to their exchanges.

Having shot non-union in different US cities, I can say without hesitation that LA offers us the best pool of non-union talent in the U.S.

Authentic Reactions (Performance)

I take a long-form approach to working with actors, encouraging different reads in the casting process to see what works. I then create time for rehearsal so that actors can inhabit and personalise their characters, and discover the blocking for each scene, making

them feel impulsive rather than staged. I also film a rough video in advance of the shoot and share this with the creative team, allowing us to discuss and refine our vision.

Locations

For every scene to unfold in a single, fluid take, we need to consider the architecture of each location and ensure that rooms are connected in such a way as to allow for organic, instinctive blocking. It's also important that our locations authentically reflect the diversity of our characters and provide an insight into who they are and the lives they lead. To achieve this we'll need to find homes of all shapes, sizes, and styles. LA offers a wide range of options, including streets that have different architectural styles. This will help us to create varied and unique visual textures, without having to move location, thereby maximizing our shooting time.

Sound and Music

Sound has the power to immerse us in a space and make us feel like we're there, so we should seek to weave a rich tapestry of foley to create a natural, atmospheric soundscape. We can then refine the mix to vary texture, amplify performance, and shape the emotional arc of each story. I envision a minimalist, atmospheric, and modern-sounding classical score that works in harmony with the sound. One that compliments the emotional arc of each spot without being melodramatic.

Editing

Combining several long takes into something that feels complete will require detailed planning and precise execution. We need to create transition points that feel related, rather than seamless, to ensure that the film feels natural rather than contrived. Using the first two scenes as an example we could push in on Glens's face in his living room and then push in on Josh's face from a wider perspective, matching character movement with camera movement.

Image/Look

We should aim to light spaces, rather than faces, using natural and practical light to create an organic palette. Using a medium format camera such as the Alexa LF will give the images a higher resolution and cinematic quality, allowing us to isolate the subjects from the background with a shallower depth of field. It also has the benefit of shooting native 4K for stills.

Thanks

I have never seen a medical spot that puts truthful storytelling and authentic performances at its core, so I'm excited by this unique opportunity to present these emotionally universal films to a wide audience. What I've presented here are my initial thoughts, but I look forward to sitting down (or zooming) with you and developing these spots into seminal films.