Dementia Assistance for Elders

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Dementia

Defined: An ‘umbrella’ term used to describe the symptoms of a group of more than 100 conditions that impair memory, behaviours and thinking. The most common causes of dementia are outlined below.

**Vascular Dementia (VaD)** is the second most common form of dementia accounting for 20% of cases. VaD occurs through a reduced blood supply to the brain usually due to stroke.

**Parkinson’s Disease (PD)** accounts for 5% of dementia cases. PD is a degenerative disorder of the central nervous system.

**Alzheimer’s Disease (AD)** is the most common form of dementia accounting for 50-70%. AD is a degenerative disease that attacks the brain resulting in impaired functioning.

**Fronto-temporal Dementia (FTD)** accounts for 5% of dementia cases. FTD is associated with rounded and tangled bundles of protein in brain nerve cells.

**Dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB)** accounts for 15% of dementia cases. DLB is associated with Lewy bodies which are abnormal brain cells.
Dementia is....

Memory loss and difficulty with some of the following:

- naming
- doing
- recognizing
- behaving
- thinking
- calculating
- planning and organizing

and it interferes with function (the elder’s ability to do things).
Dementia Warning Signs

- Asking the same questions over and over again
- Lost in familiar places
- Unable to follow directions
- Confused about time
- Problems with self-care. bathing, safety
- Inappropriate behavior
Reversible Dementias

- Intoxications
- Infections
- Metabolic disorders
- Depression
- Medication Problems

- Brain tumors
- Head injuries
- Normal pressure hydrocephalus (NPH)
- Dehydration
Just Normal Aging!

- Forgetting a word, name, or appointment
- Date or day confusion
- Losing your keys, remote, coffee, parked care, pocket knife
- Going to the store to buy milk and getting home with no milk
- Forgetting how to change the time on your watch
- Large Print Books Required
- Startling when you walk by a mirror
- Forgetting to zip
- Enjoying a routine and not having to leave the house
Not So Normal

• Making up a word for one you have lost “arm clock”
• Challenges in planning or following instructions
• Challenges at daily tasks
• Not knowing where you are
• Repeating yourself

• Conversing with the person in the mirror
• Wearing the same thing for days
• Poor judgment; scams
• Inability to retrace steps
• Withdrawal from favorite activities
• Personality or behavior changes
How is dementia diagnosed?

• The story – from the elder and from family members or others.
• Cognitive testing (testing memory, calculation, problem solving, language, ability to do multi-step tasks).
• Lab tests (to be sure it is not something else).
• Sometimes but not always a brain scan (CT or MRI)
The Stages of Alzheimer’s Dementia

• **Mild**
  – Still involved, frustrated, worried.
  – Can still take part in care decisions
  – Time to make sure things are in place

• **Moderate**
  – Needing help with many things
  – Needs constant attention, watching
  – Can still enjoy being involved, with family

• **Severe**
  – Total care
How do we treat?

• Medications may slow the disease in about half the people who use them.
• Medications may help with behaviors – but some have risks
• Many good techniques to care for persons with dementia – and make their life better
• The right setting for care
• Manage the health care system
• Extra attention to care as they move to the next world.
• Care for the carers
Challenges of Caregiving

- Understanding Alzheimer’s and related dementias
- Identifying yourself as a “caregiver”
- Adjusting your response to changes in person you are caring for – learning how to identify and respond to challenging behaviors
- Adjusting the way you communicate – understanding non-verbal communications – understanding and taking into consideration the feelings, wants and needs of the person receiving care
- Responding to your stress and maintaining well-being
- Financial challenges
- Managing other health conditions (diabetes)
Think outside the box!

- Direct Funding Opportunities
- Partnerships
  - Work that has already occurred that you can build on?
- Free Resources
- Learning Opportunities
Culturally Competent Dementia Resources

• REACH into Indian Country
• NICOA SAVVY Caregiver Initiative
• Music and Memory

Learning Opportunities

• Annual Webinar Series
• Technical Assistance through National Alzheimer’s and Dementia Resource Center [www.NADRC.ACL.GOV](http://www.NADRC.ACL.GOV)
ACL Alzheimer’s and Related Dementia Funding Opportunities

- Alzheimer’s Disease Programs Initiative (ADPI)
  - Programs for States
  - Programs for Communities
RESOURCES

- National Alzheimer’s and Dementia Resource Center
  [WWW.NADRC.ACL.GOV](http://WWW.NADRC.ACL.GOV)
- [www.NICOA.Org](http://www.NICOA.Org)
- Local Alzheimer’s Association
THANK YOU!