UNDERSTANDING DEMENTIA

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Understanding What Dementia Is

• An umbrella term for a decline in mental ability
  • SEVERE enough to interfere with daily life
    • Memory
    • Language
    • Reasoning
    • Judgment
    • Visuospatial Skills
    • Orientation
• Over 60 known forms of Dementia
• Mild/Moderate/Severe Stages
Grasping What Dementia is NOT

- Dementia is **NOT** Alzheimer's
- Memory Loss means Dementia
- A diagnosis of Dementia means my life is over
- My aunt has it, so I will too.
Top 10 Symptoms

• Memory Problems
  • Dates/Events
  • Well-traveled routes
  • Names/Faces of Friends and Family
• Difficulty planning and problem solving
  • Paying Bills, Following a Recipe

• Language Problems
  • Football=Kickball
• Confusion to Date and Time
• Poor Judgment
  • Wearing a t-shirt and sandals during the winter
Top 10 Symptoms

- Visuospatial Difficulties
  - Seeing Water/Holes, Increased Clumsiness
- Misplacing things
  - Inability to replace steps
  - Putting items in incorrect places
- Changes in Mood
  - Extreme highs and lows
  - Depression very common
- Loss of Initiative
- Personality Changes
BIG FOUR

- Alzheimer's Disease (AD)
  - Most common form of Dementia (60%)
  - 5.3 million Americans affected
    - 2/3 of affected are women.
  - Irreversible, progressive brain disease
  - Abnormal deposits of specific proteins that affect normal brain function
  - Only 100% diagnosis is an autopsy
BIG FOUR

• Vascular Dementia
  • Second most common (40%)
  • Symptoms vary by what part of the brain experienced oxygen deprivation was affected by a stroke and in turn the cells affected
  • Typically is paired with weakness or paralysis of limbs as well as speech difficulties
BIG FOUR

- Lewy Body Disease
  - Much rarer form of Dementia
  - Lewy Bodies are those brain abnormalities
  - Symptoms include confusion, hallucinations, stooped posture, rigidity and shuffled gait
  - No treatment
BIG FOUR

- Frontotemporal Dementia
  - Least common of the “big four”
  - 50,000 people in US
    - 2% of cases
  - Affects the frontal and temporal lobes
  - Symptoms include strange or sexually disinhibited behavior, lack of empathy, poor personal hygiene, loss of motivation, repetitive and compulsive speech and actions
MCI=Dementia Lite?

• More limitations than a normal aging brain, but not enough to constitute as Dementia
• Can affect a variety of normal though processes, but does not impact mood or the ability to function day-to-day
• Can be a sign of obtaining Dementia in the future, but around 60% of people who develop MCI's don't get worse and some even get better
Brain Basics

NORMAL BRAIN

BRAIN AFFECTED BY DEMENTIA
Mild Dementia

- Problems coming up with the right word or name
- Hard time performing tasks in social or work settings
- Losing or misplacing a valuable object
- Increasing difficulty with planning or organizing
Moderate Dementia

- Forgetting own personal history
- Moody or withdrawn, especially with mental or social situations
- Confusion to time and place
- The need for help choosing proper clothing
- Incontinence issues
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Personality and behavioral changes
Severe Dementia

- Round the clock care
- Changes in physical abilities, including walking, sitting, and eventually swallowing
- Increasing difficulties with communicating
- Become more vulnerable to infections, especially pneumonia
Memory

- Short Term
  - Limited Capacity
- Long Term
  - Stored
  - Ability to obtain the memory
- Think of Maya Angelou!
  - "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."
Understanding the Anatomy

- Frontal Lobe
  - Higher intellectual functioning
- Parietal Lobe
  - Movement and ability to make sense of your sense organs
- Temporal Lobe
  - Most affected lobe in Dementia due to the locations of:
    - Hippocampus, Auditory Cortex, and Wernicke's Area
- Occipital Lobe
  - Vision
- Brain Stem
Aphasia

• Communication Principles
  • Change
  • Context
  • No Expectations
  • Reassurance
  • Consistency
• More than Speech
  • My Sweet JoAnn
• Successful Strategies
  • Talk to them, not about them
  • Use sounds for encouragement
  • Speak at a slower pace, with pauses in-between topics
  • Avoid Infantilizing Communication
Lost & Wandering

• Reasons for Wandering
  • Continuing with a habit
  • Relieving boredom
  • Using up energy
  • Being confused
  • Relieving pain
  • Searching for loved ones or animals

• Wanderers Information Sheet
  • Beneficial in all situations
Aggression & Agitation

- Verbal
- Physical
- Drawing the Square
  - Muscle Memory
- Reasons behind Aggression
  - Physical
  - Medication
  - Paranoia
  - Delusion
  - Hallucination
  - Well-meaning but poorly executed caregiving
Functional Problems

- Executive Functioning
  - Planning
  - Organizing
  - Sequencing
  - Abstracting
- Planning tasks become extraordinarily difficult
- Peanut Butter Jelly Time
Risk Factors

- APOE
- Lifestyle
  - Drugs
  - Alcohol
- Smoking
- Diet
- Exercise
- Newspaper Headlines...
  - Pollutants, Medications, Aluminum, Diet Sodas, Sugar, Salt!
Caring for Dementia

• Control
  • Sun Setting and Rising
• Daily Routine
  • Positive
• Dignity
  • “Do Unto Others”
• Simplified
  • Choose your words wisely
Managing Incontinence

• Causes:
  • Brain Deterioration
  • UTI
  • Medications
  • Inadequate Hydration

• Best Practices for All
  • Scheduled Toileting
  • Prompted Voiding
  • Habit Training
Managing Diet & Eating Difficulties

- Observe
- Create a natural feeling
- Slower eaters
- Weight gain
- Medications
- Interest
- Hydration
- Swallowing/Choking
Patient Proofing

• Tips and Tricks
  • Visuospatial Issues
  • Locks
  • Neighbors/Staff Training
  • Stairs/Ramps
• Keeping Track of Loved Ones
• Easy to Read Signs
  • Thermostat
  • Fridge
  • Bathroom
    • Grandma’s House
What We Can Do as Professionals

• Educate
  • Yourself
  • Staff
  • Family
• Advocate
  • For the individual
  • For the family
• Assist
  • Dementia Focused
• Judgment Free Zone
  • Airports Study for Dementia
Resources

- www.NCDDP.org
- www.alz.org
- www.hartfordign.org
- www.nursinghomemagaine.ca
- www.ninds.nih.gov
- www.consultgerin.org
- www.aoa.gov
- www.care4elders.com
- www.theaftd.org
- www.dbs-sar.com
- www.caregiver.org
- www.ideasconsultinginc.com
- www.lbda.org
- www.mayoclinic.org
- www.psychguides.com