



Dementia and Responsive Behaviours

What is Dementia:

- A slow progressive disorder of the brain that affects memory, judgment, language, personality and behaviour
- NOT part of normal aging
- Affects approximately 1/20 over the age of 65, but 1/3 over the age of 85
- Irreversible dementia cannot be cured, only treated, but causes of reversible dementia can be treated and the symptoms reversed

Causes of Dementia

Irreversible

Alzheimer Disease
Vascular (multi-infarct)

Mixed Alzheimer's and Vascular

Others – Frontal lobe, Pick's Disease, HIV,
Lewy Body, Parkinson's

Reversible

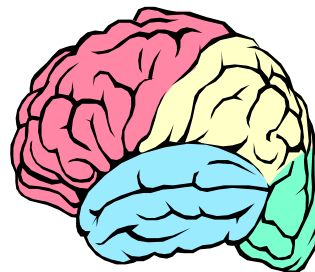
Depression
Medications

Thyroid deficiency

Nutritional Deficiencies

In Irreversible Dementia – the brain cells die, spaces (ventricles) in the brain get larger, and the chemical messengers (neurotransmitters) decrease

The Brain and Behaviour – changes in behaviour and cognition are related to how the disease affects the brain.



Symptoms of Dementia:

Cognitive changes – memory loss, speech and language loss, changes to visual-spatial function, abstract thinking and insight/judgment decline, unable to plan or organize

Emotional changes - anxiety, depression, irritability, mood swings, apathy, personality changes

Physical changes – loss of motor coordination, mobility, loose: bladder/bowel control, temperature regulation, swallowing, sleep/wake cycle changes

Behavioural changes – repetitive, resistance, wandering, withdrawal, agitation/aggression, sexual behaviours, socially inappropriate behaviours/disinhibition

Understanding Challenging Behaviours

Challenging behaviours of dementia are the person's best attempt to express themselves using the remaining abilities they have.

Remember:

- all behaviour has meaning
- all behaviour has a cause or causes
- causes of behaviour may be related to many different factors, including unmet needs, and not just the person's dementia

**Behaviours may be caused by several different factors
not just the person's dementia**

Factors related to the person's PSYCHIATRIC and PHYSICAL HEALTH:

- Dementia, depression, delirium, other psychiatric conditions
- Side effects of medication – drowsiness, confusion, constipation
- Underlying chronic health conditions-
- Pain
- Constipation, dehydration
- Impaired vision or hearing

Factors related to the person's SOCIAL HISTORY:

- Past life experiences
- Interests, preferences, routines
- Spiritual practices or beliefs
- Work history
- Personality and coping style
- Relationship to family, friends, social support

Factors related to the PHYSICAL and SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- Poor sensory environment – lighting, color contrasts, patterns of floors
- Over stimulation – too much noise, activity and movement
- Boredom
- Loneliness
- Lack of orientation information or cues: signs, clocks, calendars
- Your approach – rushing, moving too quickly into the person's personal space, focusing on the task instead of the person, speaking too quickly using complex words and sentences, body language that conveys impatience or frustration, demanding or high pitched tone of voice