Dementia and Intellectual and Developmental Disability

Early Evaluation of Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease

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Produced on behalf of DDS by the Center for Developmental Disabilities Evaluation and Research (CDDER)
Barriers to Recognition of Early Alzheimer's Disease

- Early changes can be quite subtle or atypical
- Assessment is highly caregiver- and provider-dependent
- An informant who knows the patient well is worth their weight in gold!
  - Family?
  - Established group home manager?
  - Newly hired support staff?
Importance of Early Evaluation

- Early identification of treatable or improve-able conditions: i.e.; depression, hypothyroidism, etc.
- Allows for more thoughtful and thorough explanation to concerned caregivers
- Stimulates discussion about future planning, setting realistic expectations, adequate support, appropriate workshop/day program accommodations
Importance of Early Evaluation

- Initiation of appropriate psychiatric treatment, consideration of anti-dementia therapy, psychotherapy
- Opportunity for caregiver support, education, anticipatory guidance
- Think about screening starting at age 40
A Return to Point A and Point B

For more information on assessing change over time from Point “A” to Point “B”, see the webinar “Understanding Age-Related Changes”.

Point “A” → ? → Point “B”
Making the Diagnosis

- Diagnosis of inclusion AND exclusion
- Identify coexisting conditions and endeavor to treat/improve all as feasible

Recall the list of potential coexisting conditions in adults with DS:
- Hypothyroidism
- Sensory deficits
  - Early/aggressive cataracts
  - Hearing loss
- Early menopause
- Atlantoaxial Instability and cervical spine disease
- Obstructive sleep apnea
- Osteoarthritis
- Decrease in functional ability
- Osteoporosis
- Celiac disease
Making the Diagnosis

- Consider overshadowing features of new or worsening/concurrent psychiatric illness
- **Review** all supporting data
- **Keep careful records** to follow performance over time
- Diagnosis doesn’t have to be given at the first visit
Additional Webinars on Aging with IDD

General Aging in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- Understanding Age Related Changes
- The Role of Polypharmacy
- Identifying and Assessing Pain
- Behavior Related Changes and Aging in Adults with IDD
- Health Promotion and Aging in Adults with IDD
- Mobility and Aging in Adults with IDD
- Aging with Down Syndrome
- Aging and Cerebral Palsy

Dementia and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- Introduction to Dementia and Aging with IDD
- Early Evaluation of Dementia and Alzheimer’s Disease
- Stages of Alzheimer’s Disease
- Applying the Knowledge to Dementia Caregiving and Caregiver Support
- Caregiving in Action: Case Studies and Practical Tips
Additional Aging with IDD Resources

Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS)

Center for Developmental Disabilities Evaluation & Research
http://shriver.umassmed.edu/cdder/aging_idd_education
Training produced by the Center for Developmental Disabilities Evaluation & Research (CDDER) on behalf of the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS)

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