Dementia and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Stages of Alzheimer’s Disease

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Stages of Alzheimer’s Disease

- The Importance of Expectation-Setting
- Early Stage
- Mid Stage
- Advanced or End Stage Dementia
Early Stage

- Can be very subtle…be an astute observer!
- Usually mild changes are noted in higher level functions/skills
- Early signs may be seen in the form of personality or mood changes
- Difficulty with short term memory starts to take on a more noticeable pattern
  - Decreased ability to learn new things
  - Decreased ability to remember recently given information
Mid Stage

- Ability to perform baseline skills becomes much more impaired
  - Work skills, household chores, academic skills may have very noticeable impact

- Ability to perform personal care skills becomes more affected
  - Need more help with dressing, bathing, toileting

- Memory becomes more affected, impacting every day life
  - Need more cueing and prompting
  - Need more reminders
Advanced/Late Stage

Features include:

- Profound memory loss
  - Unable to recognize loved ones
- Loss of meaningful speech
  - Usually 6 words or less, or mostly just vocalizations
- Full incontinence (bowel and bladder)
- Total functional dependence
The Trajectory of Dementia

- The stages of dementia are a general framework
  - Every person has a different time course
- Mid stage dementia can often be the longest stage
  - Distinguished by *not* being early stage and *not yet* having features of advanced disease
- Having a general sense of where on the trajectory the individual is helps for setting expectations and preparing for the future
Time Course

- Dementia is typically gradual and steady
- Any “rapid” deterioration is not expected
  - Evaluate the person for acute underlying medical issue
- Adults with dementia become more vulnerable to physical and cognitive setbacks in the setting of medical illness
- Often dementia will appear to “accelerate” in the setting of an acute illness, hospitalization, etc.
Dementia is a Terminal Disease

- Dementia is terminal (deadly)
- Death occurs due to complications of dementia
  - Immobility, poor swallowing and nutritional intake lead to
  - Increased risk of infections, respiratory illnesses, etc.
- As dementia progresses, one of the key goals is to maintain medical stability
  - Encourage adequate nutrition
  - Provide healthy/intact skin integrity
  - Avoid sick contacts: use good hand hygiene practices, get recommended vaccinations
Physical Changes Throughout the Progression

- Physical changes and losses can occur as part of the natural progression of dementia

- These include:
  - Worsening gait impairment
  - Worsening ability to swallow (dysphagia)
  - Worsening incontinence
  - Risk of new onset seizures
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
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