DEMENTIA- LET'S DIVE IN

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Dementia: Let's Dive In

- **Presented by Unicity Care Management**

What Is Dementia?

- Dementia is a neurological condition that affects cognitive functioning due to progressive brain cell damage. It impacts memory, thinking, behavior, emotions, and the ability to perform daily activities. Dementia is not a normal part of aging and is different from delirium.

Key Facts

- Dementia is progressive and currently has no cure
- Alzheimer's disease accounts for 60–80% of dementia cases
- Over 6.7 million Americans age 65+ live with Alzheimer's today
- Numbers are expected to nearly double by 2060
- Dementia can affect younger adults, including those in their 50s

How Dementia Impacts Daily Life

- Dementia can affect:
- Memory and thinking
- Judgment and reasoning
- Emotions and personality
- Behavior and impulse control
- Balance and movement

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Activities of Daily Living (ADLs):

- Bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting
- Cooking, eating, household tasks
- Driving and managing finances
- Using phones or computers
- Social engagement
- Common Signs & Symptoms

Symptoms vary by person and dementia type and may include:

- Memory loss and confusion
- Repeating questions or statements
- Wandering or getting lost
- Poor safety awareness
- Social withdrawal or apathy
- Difficulty recognizing people or objects
- Sundowning (late-day confusion and agitation)
- Paranoia, hallucinations, or delusions
- Changes in balance or walking

Dementia vs. Delirium

- Delirium is a sudden, often reversible change in mental status caused by medical issues such as:
- Infections (UTI, pneumonia, COVID)
- Dehydration or pain
- Medication changes
- Electrolyte or blood sugar imbalances
- Sudden confusion should always be medically evaluated.

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Diagnosis

- There is no single test for dementia. Diagnosis may involve:
- Medical and neurological evaluations
- Bloodwork and brain imaging (CT/MRI)
- Cognitive testing (Mini-Mental Exam)
- Neuropsychological assessments
- Review of medical, psychological, and social history
- Risk Factors
- Age
- Family history and genetics
- Stroke or traumatic brain injury (TBI)
- Heart and vascular disease
- Excessive alcohol or drug use

Treatment Options

- While dementia cannot be cured, treatment can help manage symptoms:
- Common Medications
- Aricept (Donepezil) – mild to severe dementia
- Namenda (Memantine) – moderate to severe dementia
- IV Infusion Therapies
- Leqembi – targets beta-amyloid; Medicare-covered
- Behavioral & Mood Management
- Antipsychotics, mood stabilizers, and anti-anxiety medications may be used when appropriate

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Care & Support Options

- Private caregivers (hourly or live-in)
- Adult day programs or memory clubs
- Assisted living or memory care communities
- Caregiver education and support groups

Tips for Caregivers

- Track and report changes in behavior
- Create consistent routines
- Communicate calmly and clearly
- Set realistic expectations
- Take breaks and seek respite care
- Build a strong support system

The Four R's Approach

- Reassure – offer comfort and safety
- Reconsider – see the situation from their perspective
- Redirect – shift focus to something calming or positive
- Relax – stay calm; emotions are contagious
- Reducing Dementia Stigma
- Dementia affects individuals and families—no one chooses it
- People with dementia still experience emotions, connection, and joy
- Compassion, understanding, and respect matter

Helpful Resources

- Alzheimer's Association – www.alz.org
- Alzheimer's.gov
- National Institute on Aging – www.nia.nih.gov
- Positive Approach to Care (Teepa Snow) – www.teepasnow.com

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How Unicity Care Management Helps

- Unicity Care Management provides compassionate, personalized support to individuals living with dementia and their families. Our experienced care managers help navigate the complexities of the healthcare system by coordinating medical care, developing individualized dementia care plans, and advocating for clients at appointments. We support families through every stage of the disease by connecting them with appropriate care options, community resources, and education—reducing stress, improving quality of life, and ensuring dignity and safety for those living with dementia.
- Comprehensive care coordination
- Personalized dementia care plans
- Advocacy during medical appointments
- Education, resources, and caregiver support