

Dementia Related Falls

Prepared by Mark Pratt
Clinical Nurse Consultant: Dementia/Delirium
Northern Beaches Health Service
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Aims of session

To introduce the common types of dementia.

To introduce common characteristics of dementia.

To introduce the Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD).

To describe how the above are related to falls.

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Common types of dementia

- **Alzheimer's Disease:** *characterized by cerebral atrophy, neurofibrillary tangles of Tau proteins, deposition of β amyloid proteins around neuronal cells*
- **Vascular Dementia:** *characterized by small cerebral infarcts*
- **Lewy Body Dementia:** *characterized by cerebral atrophy and deposition of intracytoplasmic protein deposits*
- **Fronto-Temporal Dementia:** *characterized by atrophy of the frontal and temporal lobes of cerebral cortex*
- **Other Dementia**

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Common characteristics of dementia

Each type of dementia has one or more of the following as a core feature:

- **Aphasia:** disturbance of language
- **Apraxia:** disturbance in skilled motor activity
- **Agnosia:** disturbance in the ability to recognise familiar faces or objects
- **Executive Function:** disturbance in the ability to plan, initiate and organise; disturbance in the ability to understand the consequences of their behaviour

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Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia

Include but are not limited to:

- Wandering and restlessness
- Anxiety
- Psychosis
- Depression
- Aggression
- Abnormal vocalisations
- Eating disorders
- Sexual disinhibition

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BPSD II

Some reversible causes of Wandering and Restlessness:

- **Akathisia:** side effects of antipsychotic medication
- **Delusions:** misidentification of home and other people
- **Agitated depression:** marked panic and anxiety symptoms. Patients feel compelled to seek help
- **Boredom and Loneliness**
- **Temporal disturbances:** few ties to reality
- **Constipation**

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Delusions

- 1. People are stealing things:** *cannot remember location of common household objects*
- 2. House is not one's home:** *patient no longer remembers or recognizes own home*
- 3. Spouse (or other caregiver) is an imposter:** *Capgras Phenomena. Patient no longer recognizes the person*
- 4. Abandonment:** *patient may believe that they have been abandoned or institutionalized. Patients retain some insight and this may be a reality*

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Delusions

- 1. People are stealing things:**
 - *The person may be unable to remember the location of household objects.*
 - *The person may begin hiding things thus compounding the issue*
 - *The person may become increasingly more agitated as more things 'go missing'*
 - *The person may have a delusion that people are actually entering the house to steal things*

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Delusions

- 2. The house is not one's own:**
 - *The person no longer recognizes their home*
 - *The person is no longer living in their home*
 - *The person makes attempts to go 'home'*

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Delusions

- 3. Spouse or other care giver is an imposter:**
 - *Also known as Capgras Phenomena*
 - *Can provoke violence in people*
 - *Distressing for relatives and caregivers*
 - *Linked to a loss of autonomic signs that normally accompany the recognition of a familiar face*
 - *This leads to a loss in affective response for familiar people, which the person interprets in a paranoid, suspicious way so the person must be an imposter*

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Delusions

- 4. Abandonment:**
 - *The person may believe that they have been abandoned or that they are about to be abandoned*
 - *The person may have actually been abandoned*
 - *The person may have retained some insight and perceive themselves as a burden, leading to the feelings of abandonment*
 - *This can be linked to the initial delusions identified i.e. their house is not their home +/- their spouse or caregiver is an imposter*

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Agitated Depression

- A. Major Depression
- B. Two or more of the following:
 - *Motor agitation*
 - *Intense inner tension*
 - *Racing/crowded thoughts*

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Conclusion

Different types of dementia increase risk of falling in different ways

Different types of dementia share core characteristics which compound the specific risk factors

Some BPSD are iatrogenic and reversible

Other BPSD require careful assessment and treatment

Never underestimate the effect that depression can have on an individual