CONFUSION, DEMENTIA AND DEPRESSION

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OBJECTIVES

• Explain the difference between acute and chronic confusion
• Describe depression and how it is similar to and different from confusion
TOUR OF THE BRAIN

- Alzheimer’s Association:
  - [http://www.alz.org/braintour/3_main_parts.asp](http://www.alz.org/braintour/3_main_parts.asp)
# CHRONIC VS. ACUTE CONFUSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dementia</th>
<th>Delirium</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Chronic</td>
<td>- Acute</td>
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<td>- Changes in mental abilities that occur slowly; over weeks to years</td>
<td>- Changes in mental abilities that occur quickly; over hours to days</td>
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<td>- Caused by physical changes in the brain</td>
<td>- Caused by toxins in the brain</td>
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<td>- Usually not reversible</td>
<td>- Usually reversible</td>
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TYPES OF DEMENTIA

• Alzheimer’s Disease
• Vascular Dementia
• Frontotemporal Dementia
• Lewey Body Dementia
IS IT NORMAL AGING OR DEMENTIA?

• Alzheimer’s Association: 10 signs

http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_10_signs_of_alzheimers.asp
ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

• Progressive decline
• May include problems with:
  • Memory loss (especially short-term)
  • Executive function
  • Personality changes
  • Functional ability
  • Sundowning
  • Behavior
  • Speaking and swallowing
WHAT’S HAPPENING IN THE BRAIN?

• Alzheimer’s Association

• http://www.alz.org/braintour/alzheimers_changes.asp
ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

• Diagnosis
  • No single test to diagnose
  • Mainly based on mental and behavioral changes
  • Blood tests and scans to rule out other causes

• Treatment
  • No cure
  • Some medications available to slow progression of symptoms
VASCULAR DEMENTIA

• Caused by changes in the blood flow to the brain
• Can have a slow or sudden onset
• Similar changes in memory, language, and motor abilities as in Alzheimer’s Disease
VASCULAR DEMENTIA

- **Diagnosis**
  - Screening to identify mental and behavioral changes
  - Sometimes changes in blood flow to the brain can be seen on scans (CT, MRI)

- **Treatment**
  - “What’s good for the heart is good for the brain”
    - Manage blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol
FRONTOTEMPORAL LOBE DEMENTIA

• Frontal and temporal lobes of the brain shrink which affects their functioning
• Usually occurs between ages of 35-75
• May run in families
• Usually first changes are in language and behavior
• Often causes socially inappropriate behavior
LEWY BODY DEMENTIA

- Caused by abnormal deposits in the brain called Lewy bodies
- Early, well-formed visual hallucinations are common
- Often develop Parkinson’s-like movements (shuffling gait, hunched posture, rigid muscles)
- Usually less drastic fluctuations in memory and thinking than in Alzheimer’s or vascular dementia
DELIRIUM

- Acute change in mental abilities that occurs quickly, usually over hours or days
- Caused by toxins in the brain
- Usually reversible, especially if treated early
DELIRIUM SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

• Sudden change
• Very sleepy and drowsy or agitated and restless
• New difficulty focusing; very easily distracted
• Hallucinations (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling)
• Delusions (usually paranoid)
• Disorganized thinking
  • Incoherent or rambling speech; switching unpredictably from subject to subject
POSSIBLE CAUSES OF DELIRIUM

- Infection (especially urinary or respiratory)
- Stroke
- Heart attack
- Medications
- Drugs/alcohol
- Dehydration
- Pain
- Severe constipation
- Liver or kidney problems
- Breathing problems
TREATMENT OF DELIRIUM

• Key to reversal of delirium is to find and treat the cause of the delirium as soon as possible
• If left untreated, can cause permanent changes in mental abilities
• People with dementia are at a higher risk to develop delirium
DEPRESSION

• How common is depression in older adults?
  • Living at home: 2%
  • Chronically ill: 9%
  • Hospitalized: 36%
  • Nursing home (cognitively intact): 10-20%
  • Nursing home (cognitively impaired): 50-70%
  • Stroke: 47%
  • Heart attack: 45%
  • Parkinson’s: 39%

(from uptodate.com)
RISK FACTORS FOR DEPRESSION IN OLDER ADULTS

- Female
- Widowed, divorced or separated
- Social isolation
- Other medical conditions
- Uncontrolled pain
- Insomnia
- Functional impairment
- Cognitive impairment
SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

- Feeling down
- Decreased interest or pleasure in activities*
- Weight change*
- Problems sleeping*
- Restless or sluggish*
- Having no energy
- Feeling guilty or worthless
- Problems thinking or making decisions*
- Suicidal thoughts

*Can also happen with dementia/delirium
TREATMENT FOR DEPRESSION

- Support groups
- Counseling
- Regular exercise
- Medications
IF YOU’RE LOVED ONE HAS DEPRESSION…

- Remember…it is not your fault!
- Help establish a daily routine and try to schedule challenging tasks for times of day the person usually feels best
- Include daily physical activity, especially in the morning
- Make a list of activities, people and places the person enjoys and incorporate them into the daily routine
- Acknowledge person’s feelings of sadness/frustration
- Provide reassurance and celebrate small successes
RESOURCES FOR HELP

• Alzheimer’s Association
https://www.alz.org/we_can_help.asp