

Module 1: Dementia and Alzheimers'



What are dementia and Alzheimers'?

Dementia is a syndrome in which there is deterioration in memory, thinking, behaviour and the ability to perform everyday activities. Although dementia mainly affects older people, it is not a normal part of ageing.

Alzheimer's is a degenerative brain disease that is caused by complex brain changes following cell damage. It leads to dementia symptoms that gradually worsen over time.

Dementia has a physical, psychological, social, and economic impact, not only on people with dementia, but also on their carers, families and society at large.



What are dementia and Alzheimers'?

Dementia is a syndrome – usually of a chronic or progressive nature – in which there is deterioration in cognitive function (i.e. the ability to process thought). It affects memory, thinking, orientation, comprehension, calculation, learning capacity, language, and judgement. Consciousness is not affected.

The impairment in cognitive function is commonly accompanied, and occasionally preceded, by deterioration in emotional control, social behaviour, or motivation.

There is often a lack of awareness and understanding of dementia, resulting in stigmatization and barriers to diagnosis and care. The impact of dementia on carers, family and society at large can be physical, psychological, social and economic.

What are dementia and Alzheimers'?

There is no treatment currently available to cure dementia or to alter its progressive course.

However, much can be offered to support and improve the lives of people with dementia and their carers and families. The principal goals for dementia care are:

- early diagnosis in order to promote early and optimal management
- optimizing physical health, cognition, activity and well-being
- identifying and treating accompanying physical illness
- detecting and treating challenging behavioural and psychological symptoms
- providing information and long-term support to carers.

Symptoms and behaviour

Many people find the changes in behaviour caused by Alzheimer's to be the most challenging and distressing effect of the disease. The chief cause of behavioural symptoms is the progressive deterioration of brain cells. However, medication, environmental influences and some medical conditions also can cause symptoms or make them worse.



Symptoms and behaviour (continuation)

In early stages, people may experience behaviour and personality changes such as:

- irritability, anxiety, depression

In later stages, other symptoms may occur including:

- aggression and anger
- anxiety and agitation
- general emotional distress
- physical or verbal outbursts
- restlessness, pacing, shredding paper or tissues
- hallucinations (seeing, hearing or feeling things that are not really there)
- delusions (firmly held belief in things that are not true)

Do you want to learn more?

Our interactive Resource Pack will give you information about

- concerns that you as caregiver might have
- what can be done
- useful tips how to handle the burden of care
- how to avoid stress and burnout
- how to deal with your emotions
- acceptance of the disorder
- and more!

You will also find exercises and activities for YOU and for the care receiver!



The Resource Pack will be available in May 2020!