

Review of Alzheimer's and Related Dementias

CINDY M PEARMAN MD FAAFP FAAHPM HMDC
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE HOSPICE/PALLIATIVE CARE

What is Dementia?

- ▶ A syndrome of symptoms caused by a decline in memory and thinking enough to affect daily life

What is Dementia?

Alzheimer's is the cause of 60-80% of dementia cases.
Vascular dementia is next most common.
It is possible to have a combination of types (Mixed dementia)

At least two of these must be affected:

- ▶ Memory
- ▶ Language and communication
- ▶ Attention, ability to focus
- ▶ Reasoning and judgement
- ▶ Visual perception (not the same as vision)

The Ten Warning Signs

- ▶ Memory loss that disrupts your life
- ▶ Problems with planning or problem solving
- ▶ Difficulty doing familiar tasks at home or work
- ▶ Confusion about time or place
- ▶ Trouble making sense of visual images or spatial relationships

Ten Warning Signs, cont.

- ▶ New problems with language, speaking or writing
- ▶ Losing things and being unable to retrace steps to find
- ▶ Decreased judgement
- ▶ Social withdrawal, avoiding activities or events
- ▶ Changes in mood and/or personality

What's Normal??

- ▶ Sometimes forgetting names, appointments, words
- ▶ Sometimes struggling with devices like electronics
- ▶ Losing things but being able to retrace steps
- ▶ Sometimes just not feeling like going out
- ▶ Getting frustrated when a routine is disrupted
- ▶ Vision changes with a medical cause

Types of Dementia

- ▶ Alzheimer's disease- 60-80% of cases
- ▶ Vascular
- ▶ Dementia from Parkinson's Disease
 - ▶ Dementia with Lewy Bodies
 - ▶ Corticobasal degeneration
- ▶ Frontotemporal Dementia

Types of Dementia, cont.

- ▶ Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy
- ▶ Huntington's Disease
- ▶ Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus
- ▶ Traumatic Brain Injury
- ▶ Mixed dementia

Types of Dementia, cont.

- ▶ Korsakoff syndrome (chronic alcohol overuse)
- ▶ Posterior Cortical Atrophy
- ▶ Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (or Jakob-Creutzfeldt)
- ▶ Mild Cognitive Impairment

Alzheimer's disease facts

Most common symptom : trouble remembering new things
 Exact cause is still not certain
 Brain changes- Neurofibrillary Plaques and Tangles:
 Plaques of beta-amyloid protein
 Tangles of Tau protein
 Found in all brains with aging to lesser degree
 Disrupt normal pathways between cells

Alzheimer's facts, cont.

- ▶ Risk factors:
 - ▶ Age- risk doubles every 5 years past 65
 - ▶ Genetics/Family History
 - ▶ Down syndrome
 - ▶ Lifestyle- diet, obesity, alcohol, poor sleep, smoking
 - ▶ Diabetes, heart disease
 - ▶ Head injuries

Diagnosing Alzheimer's

- ▶ There is still no specific test, lab, scan
- ▶ Diagnosis is by a detailed history and exam
- ▶ Labs, scans such as CT or MRI are done to look for other causes
- ▶ Screening for depression may be part of testing
- ▶ Vision, hearing testing may be helpful

Treatment of Alzheimer's

- ▶ There is no cure for Alzheimer's
- ▶ Medications currently available are intended to slow the progression
- ▶ They may lessen symptoms in some people but do not stop the disease
- ▶ Meds will help some people and not others
- ▶ Meds may be helpful for other dementia types

Medications for Alzheimer's

- ▶ Cholinesterase inhibitors
 - ▶ Donepezil (Aricept), rivastigmine (Exelon), galantamine (Razadyne)
 - ▶ Intended for early to moderate stages
 - ▶ Side effects: nausea, poor appetite, agitation, sleep changes

Medications for Alzheimer's

- ▶ NMDA receptor antagonist
 - ▶ Memantine (Namenda)
 - ▶ Intended for moderate to severe disease
 - ▶ Side effects: dizziness, headaches, sleepiness, appetite change

Advance Planning for Dementia

What to expect in later stages
 Caring for yourself
 How to talk to family and friends
 Hard decisions
 Do the paperwork
 Where to get help

What to expect as disease progresses

- ▶ Swallowing problems
 - ▶ Weight loss, wounds
 - ▶ Respiratory, urinary tract infections
- ▶ Loss of mobility and balance, falls, weakness
- ▶ Loss of language and communication
- ▶ Behavioral and personality changes
 - ▶ sundowning, sleep problems, agitation

Caring for yourself

Eat right, sleep enough, and exercise
 Schedule "off" times and stick to them!
 If people offer to help, let them!
 Do not feel guilty when you take time for yourself.
 Don't ignore your own medical care.

Talking to family and friends

- ▶ It's OK to ask visitors to abide by your loved one's schedule.
- ▶ Be cautious of people who sap your energy!
- ▶ If people want to do something, let them!
- ▶ Be aware that if you are talking in front of your loved one that they do hear you and understand
- ▶ Beware of Dr. Google

Advance Care Planning

More than just Code Status and feeding tubes
 Think of it as a road map for family when someone is unable to make their own decisions.
 It is never too early to start discussing
 Capacity vs competence: persons with dementia may still have ability
 to make medical decisions even if they no longer can manage affairs
 POA should generally not overrule the wishes expressed by the patient

Good sources for advance planning

- ▶ www.agingwithdignity.org/fivewishes
- ▶ www.caringinfo.org
- ▶ www.theconversationproject.org
- ▶ www.tn.gov/health- search advance directives
- ▶ www.nhpco.org/patients-and-caregivers/advance-care-planning
- ▶ www.nia.nih.gov/health/caregiving/advance-care-planning

Caregiving during Covid

CINDY MCCLAIN PEARMAN MD FAAFP FAAHPM HMDC
 MEDICAL DIRECTOR, UT HOSPICE/PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICES

What is Covid-19?

- ▶ A virus from the coronavirus family, usually causes common colds
- ▶ Covid-19 is novel, meaning new to humans
- ▶ Since it is new, no one had immunity to it
- ▶ For reasons we don't know, this coronavirus causes much worse illness than most coronaviruses that cause common colds

How is Covid-19 Spread?

- ▶ Usually by droplets in the air, released when we breathe, talk, sneeze, cough, sing
- ▶ Other illnesses spread by droplet are strep throat, influenza, rubella (German measles), common colds
- ▶ We know that Covid-19 can also be airborne, which makes it much more contagious
- ▶ This is like measles, chicken pox (varicella), tuberculosis
- ▶ Covid-19 is more likely to be airborne in places with poor ventilation, small closed spaces

How else is Covid Spread?

- ▶ On surfaces, such as countertops, doorknobs
- ▶ This is NOT the most common way to be exposed though!
- ▶ How long does it live on different surfaces?
 - ▶ Plastics- up to 2-3 days
 - ▶ Stainless steel- up to 2-3 days
 - ▶ Cardboard, paper- up to 24 hours
 - ▶ Glass- up to 96 hours
 - ▶ Copper- up to 4 hours
 - ▶ Air- up to 4 hours

Contagious period with Covid-19

- ▶ When do symptoms appear?
 - ▶ From 2-14 days from the time of exposure
 - ▶ This is why we must self-isolate for 14 days after exposure
- ▶ How long are persons contagious?
 - ▶ For persons with mild to moderate illness, usually 10-14 days from onset of symptoms
 - ▶ In severe illness, up to 21 days from onset of symptoms
 - ▶ Persons are contagious before they develop symptoms!

What are the common symptoms?

- ▶ Fever or chills
- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ New loss of taste or smell
- ▶ Sore throat
- ▶ Congestion, runny nose
- ▶ Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea

Symptom frequency in adults

- ▶ Fever, cough, or shortness of breath- 93%
- ▶ Fever-71%
- ▶ Cough- 80%
- ▶ Muscle aches- 61%
- ▶ Headache- 58%
- ▶ Shortness of breath- 43%
- ▶ Sore throat- 35%
- ▶ Diarrhea- 31%

Less common symptoms

- ▶ Nausea/vomiting- 16%
- ▶ Abdominal pain- 12%
- ▶ Runny nose- 7%
- ▶ Other uncommon symptoms
 - ▶ Pinkeye, eye redness, eyelid symptoms
 - ▶ Confusion (but may be very common in seniors)
 - ▶ Coughing up blood

Signs that a person needs emergency medical care ***

- ▶ Difficulty breathing
- ▶ Chest pain or pressure
- ▶ New or worsened confusion
- ▶ Inability to wake up or stay awake
- ▶ Bluish lips or face
- ▶ Notify 911 or the emergency department that you need help for someone with possible Covid-19

What if a family member is sick?

- ▶ Keep in their own room if possible, keep door closed
- ▶ Separate bathroom if possible
- ▶ Keep room well-ventilated (tips to follow on this)
- ▶ Wear a mask yourself if possible
- ▶ Use disposable plates and utensils if possible
- ▶ Clean surfaces often
- ▶ Wash your hands a lot
- ▶ Wear gloves handling laundry and disposables

What if I get sick?

- ▶ Have someone else do caregiving if possible
- ▶ Stay in a separate room, door closed
- ▶ Wear a mask at all times if you are in room with others
- ▶ Wash hands often, avoid touching common surfaces. Have someone else clean surfaces often.
- ▶ Separate bathroom if possible
- ▶ Disposable plates, utensils.
- ▶ Everyone will have to isolate at home even if they have no symptoms

What are good cleaning agents?

- ▶ Look for active ingredients such as ethanol, hydrogen peroxide, or quaternary ammonium
- ▶ Dilute bleach solution is fine in well-ventilated areas- don't mix with other cleaners!!
- ▶ Clean phones, tablets and other electronics with 70% alcohol wipes
- ▶ What about handwashing?
 - ▶ Soap and water, wash at least 20 seconds
 - ▶ Sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (ethanol)

What do I need to plan ahead for?

- ▶ Plan for who can help with caregiving if you are unable
- ▶ Try to keep 14 day supply of non-perishable food/meds/supplies
- ▶ Know what pharmacies deliver
- ▶ Sign up for grocery delivery if possible
- ▶ Influenza vaccine/pneumococcal vaccine
- ▶ Call PCP to find out where to get Covid-19 testing done should you need it

What about home health/visitors?

- ▶ Ask them their Covid-19 protocols
- ▶ Most health care agencies require daily temp checks and checklists for symptoms or exposures
- ▶ If your caregiver is self-employed, have an agreement that they will notify you of any exposures or symptoms
- ▶ Home health providers should wear masks, follow strict handwashing protocols. Consider having self-employed caregivers wear a mask also.
- ▶ Notify any professionals if you might have been exposed

Air quality for homes/offices

- ▶ Use high quality air filters (HEPA or MERV13)
- ▶ Use HEPA portable air filters if you have visitors
- ▶ Set the fan on the HVAC to "ON" in stead of "AUTO"
- ▶ Open windows for cross-ventilation if appropriate
- ▶ Run a humidifier, aim for 40-60% humidity
- ▶ You can get great tips for making your home safer at www.covidstraighttalk.org and www.epa.gov/coronavirus

Long-term care facilities

- ▶ Most do not allow visitors inside building unless the person is near death
- ▶ Some allow porch/ window visits. Most will assist with virtual (Facetime) visits and phone calls
- ▶ All facilities require strict testing and screening of employees and essential visitors
- ▶ Some facilities are testing the residents also
- ▶ Residents who are ill should quarantine in their room

Long-term care facilities

- ▶ Ask the facility how they can assist with phone/video calls
- ▶ Try to schedule these ahead of time
- ▶ Try to keep your visits upbeat and positive
- ▶ Be assured most care homes are working hard to meet emotional needs of these residents during this difficult time
- ▶ If you are able to make porch or window visits, do not come if you are sick or have been exposed!
- ▶ Wear your mask at all times if visiting.

What about the hospital?

- ▶ For non-Covid admissions, all area hospitals are allowing 1 essential visitor
- ▶ If the person is near death, more than 1 visitor may be allowed
- ▶ Visitors must wear masks, have temp check, and pass screening questions
- ▶ For covid-19 admissions, usually no visitors are allowed until the person is past the contagious period
- ▶ If we get into a surge, these quidelines may change, but will be the same for all hospitals

Hospital, continued...

- ▶ If staying with your loved one at the hospital
 - ▶ Wear your mask
 - ▶ Wash your hands often
 - ▶ Avoid going to other areas of the hospital
 - ▶ Do not go if you are sick or have been exposed
- ▶ If unable to go to the hospital
 - ▶ Give your contact info to the floor nurses
 - ▶ Ask nursing staff to assist with phone calls
 - ▶ Ask nursing staff to post your contact info
 - ▶ Ask what times are best to call to check in

Tips for coping with stress

- ▶ Have a daily routine!
- ▶ Try to eat regular meals and get enough sleep
- ▶ Limit news broadcasts when your loved one is present.
- ▶ Consider using this time for legacy activities: making scrapbooks, going through old photos, recording your loved one telling stories or answering questions about the past
- ▶ Allow trusted friends, relatives, or paid caregivers to assist so that you have some time for your own needs
- ▶ Reach out to others for support!

Signs of caregiver fatigue

- ▶ Physical and emotional exhaustion
- ▶ Depersonalization- "going through the motions"
- ▶ Feeling resentful about caregiving
- ▶ Irritability or excess anger
- ▶ Weight loss
- ▶ Negative feelings about yourself
- ▶ Trouble sleeping
- ▶ Headaches
- ▶ Loss of ability to be empathetic

Vaccines are coming!!!

- ▶ Pfizer and Moderna vaccines appears to be very effective- 95%
- ▶ Both are mRNA vaccines
 - ▶ Most vaccines are made with inactivated (live but weakened) virus or killed virus
 - ▶ This vaccine is just mRNA, a messenger chemical that tells your immune system to make antibodies
 - ▶ You cannot catch Covid-19 from the vaccine
- ▶ We don't know yet if boosters will be needed

More about vaccines-

- ▶ Covid vaccine requires 2 injections about 1 month apart
- ▶ Most people report some soreness, aches, mild fever that lasts a few days
- ▶ So far they appear much more effective than most common vaccines such as influenza (50-60% effective in adults), old shingles vaccine (51-67% effective) or new shingles vaccine (85% effective)
- ▶ Health care workers will get vaccine first, then persons over age 65 and those at high risk, then other front-line workers, then all others

Caregiving during Covid-19

- ▶ Wear your masks!
- ▶ Wash your hands!
- ▶ Stay 6 feet away from people who don't live in your home !