

*Mental Illness in the Elderly -
Dementia?*

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Community Support Services

an affiliated agency of the
County of Summit

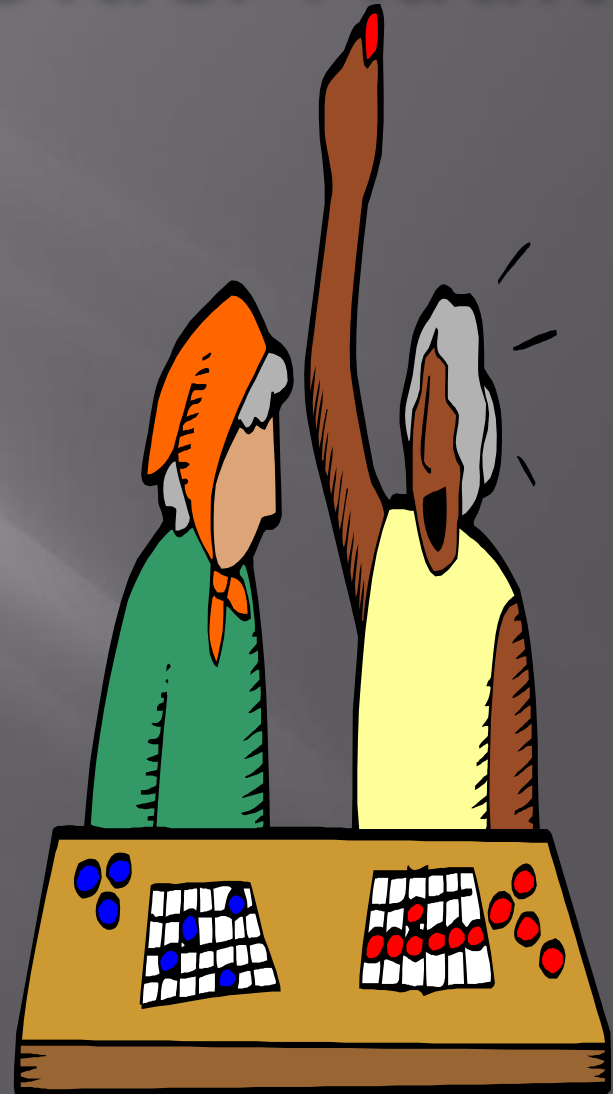
Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board

Statistics

- ▶ Lengthening of average life span
 - 47 years in 1900, 75 years in mid-1990s
- ▶ Almost 20% of the greater than fifty age group experience specific mental disorders not part of normal aging
- ▶ Unrecognized or untreated mental illness can be severely impairing or even fatal

Culture of the Older Adult

- ▶ WWI, WWII
- ▶ Depression years
- ▶ No technology
- ▶ No abuse prevention
- ▶ Family dynamics
- ▶ Prejudices



Mental Illness in the older adult

- Illnesses starting at an early age
 - Schizophrenia
 - Bipolar disorder
 - Personality disorders
 - Depressive disorders

Mental Illness in the older adult

- Specific to Older Adults- Usually
 - Dementia
 - Delirium
 - Geriatric Depression

Why Are Older Adults So Challenging?

- They don't like psychiatrists
- They don't communicate well
 - Memory impairment
 - Aphasia
 - Unaware of emotional health
- They have long histories to review



What makes them so Challenging?

- Biologic Issues
 - Slowed down metabolism
 - Laboratory abnormalities
 - Multiple medications-
 - Drug/drug interactions
 - Sensory deficits
 - Visual loss
 - Hearing impairment



What makes older adults different?



- Phase of life Issues-
 - Reminiscing
 - Grieving
 - Putting in order
 - Accepting fate
 - Increased spirituality

What Makes Older Adults Unique?

- Multiple Losses
 - Family and Friends
 - Independence/
 - Autonomy
 - Possessions
 - Bodily functions
 - Privacy



Definition of Dementia

- Slow, gradual loss of mental abilities
 - Changes in --
 - Memory
 - Personality
 - Behavior
 - Thinking Abilities

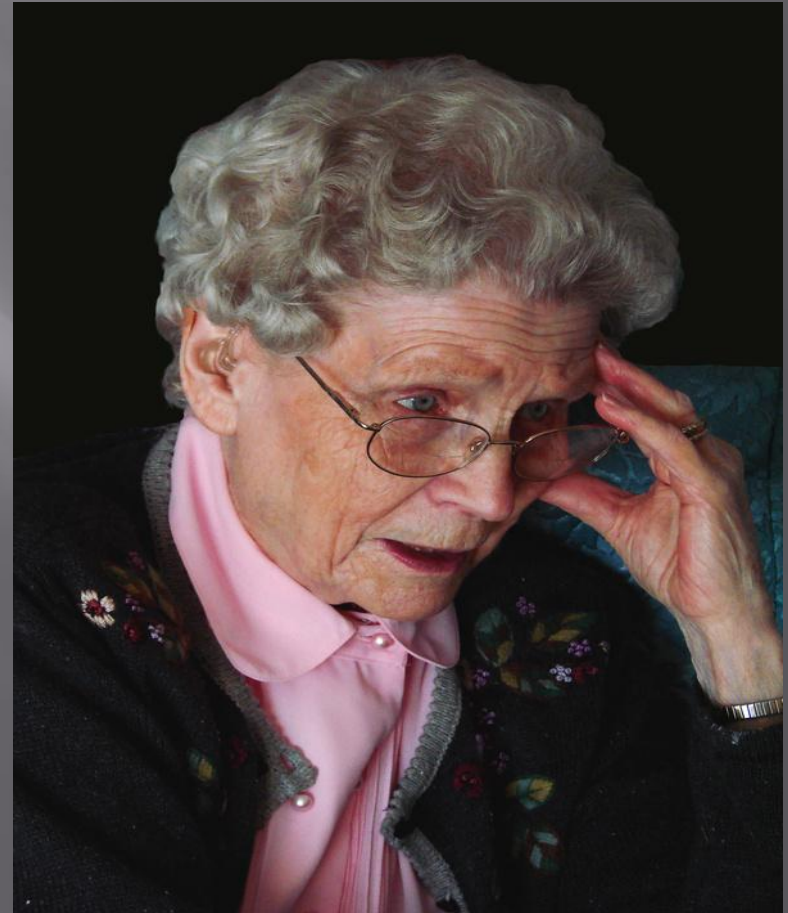


Definition of Dementia

- Alzheimer's disease is a type of dementia
- There are many types of dementia caused by different conditions
- Dementia is not a normal part of aging

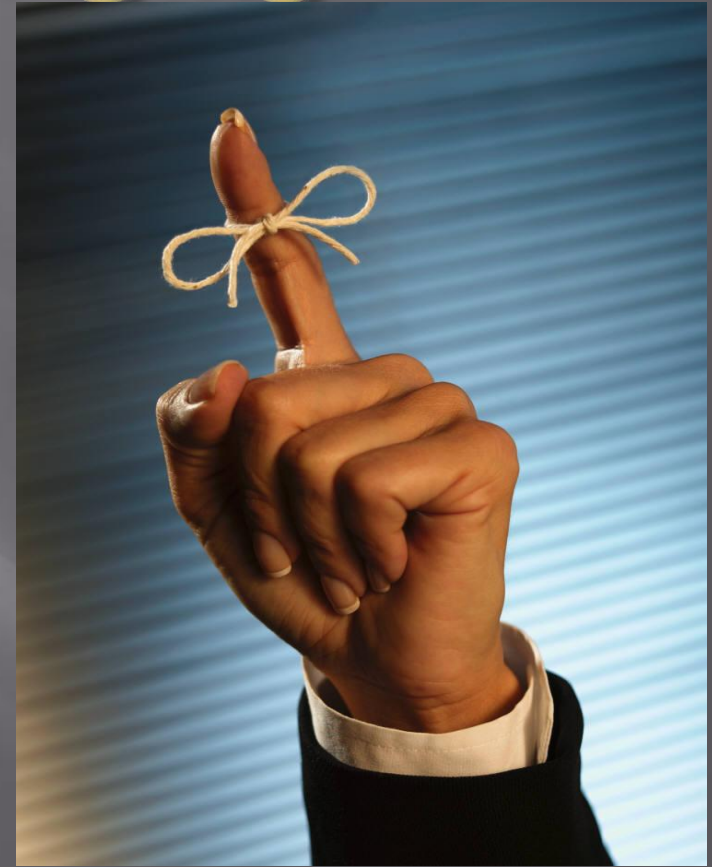
Memory Complaints

- ▶ 50-80% of older adults complain of memory problems
- ▶ These complaints are usually a product of depression



Memory and Aging

- ▶ Greater loss
 - recall > recognition capabilities
- ▶ Slowing in:
 - information processing
 - selective attention
 - problem-solving ability
- ▶ Vocabulary : increases until the mid 70s, after which it decreases



Alzheimer's Disease

- ▶ Strikes 8-15% of people over the age of 65, 43% of those over 85 yrs
- ▶ Gradual, yet relentless, attack on memory
- ▶ Other cognitive deficits
 - language
 - object recognition
 - executive functioning
- ▶ Personality change

Alzheimer's Disease

- ▶ Behavioral symptoms-impose strain on caregivers
- ▶ Direct and Indirect costs estimated at \$203 billion each year

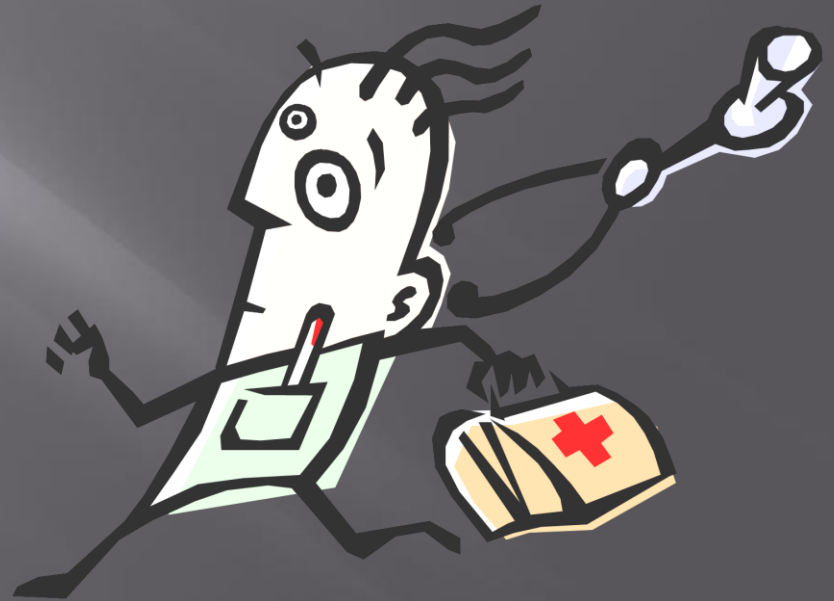


Who is at risk ?

- People over the age of 65
- Men > Women
- Less educated > More educated

Causes of dementia

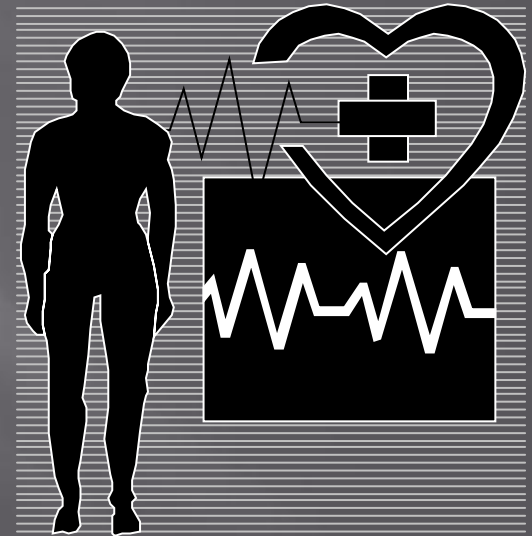
- Irreversible conditions
 - stroke
 - Parkinson's disease
 - Alzheimer's disease
 - AIDS
 - rare viruses
 - certain inherited diseases



Causes of dementia

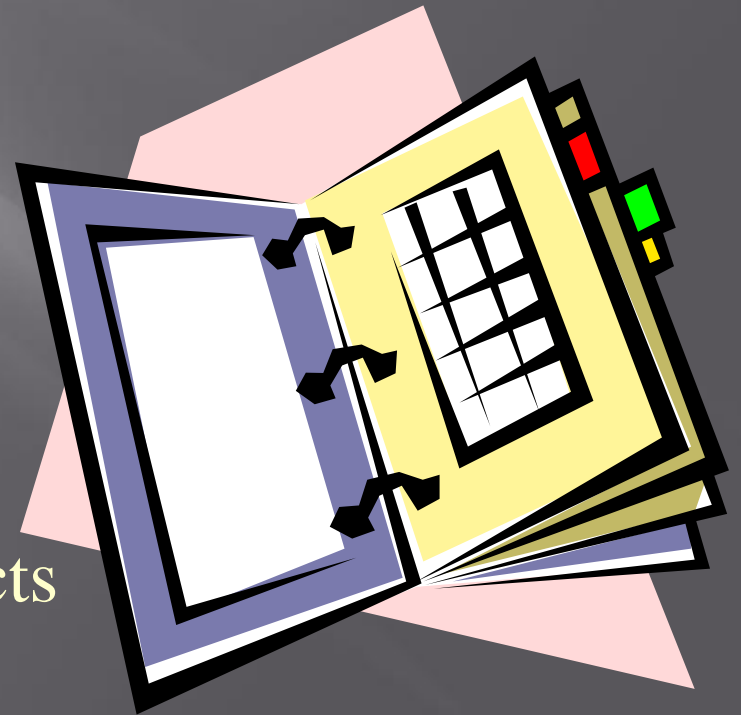
- Reversible causes

- thyroid problems
- alcoholism
- poor nutrition
- emotional problems
- reactions to medications
- other problems - head injury, certain infections, increased pressure on brain, tumors, syphilis



What are signs of dementia ?

- Forgetfulness - person may not remember
 - names
 - dates
 - events
 - directions
 - appointments
 - location of household objects



What are signs of dementia ?

- **Confusion**

- may not be able to follow directions
- may not be able to learn new skills
- judgment and reasoning may be poor

What are signs of dementia ?

- May no longer be able to:
 - dress
 - prepare food
 - wash or bathe
 - manage money
 - communicate



What are signs of dementia ?

- withdrawal
- low energy
- hostile feelings
- loss of interest
- mistrust of others
- Misinterpreting -
 - actions or words of others
 - who people are
 - environment

What are signs of dementia ?

- Difficult behaviors

- wandering
- resisting help
- agitation
- incontinence
- inappropriate sexual behaviors
- suspiciousness or paranoia



Evaluation of Dementia

- Family background
- Medical history
- Lab tests
- Psychiatric evaluation
- Oral and written tests



Treatments

- Treat underlying condition
 - medication
 - change in prescription
 - professional counselling
 - nutritional program
 - treatment of alcoholism or drug dependence
 - better social networking
 - surgery

Treatments

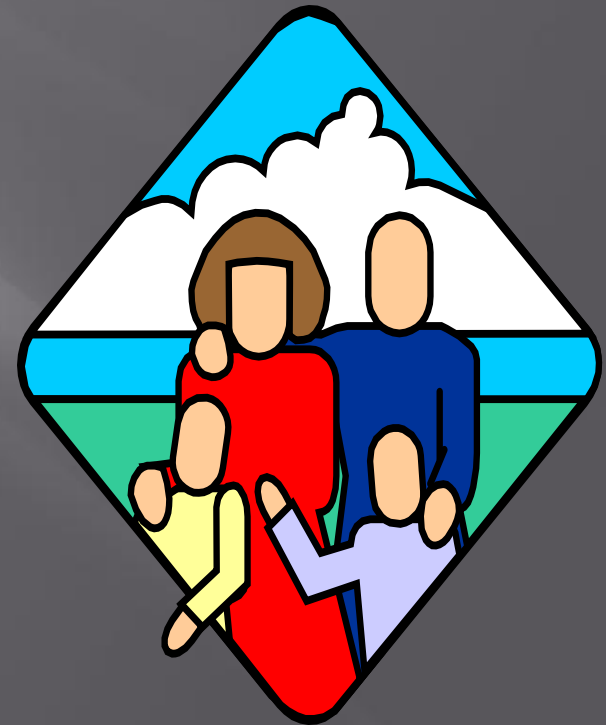
- For irreversible dementia
 - medications - sleep, depression, agitation
 - daily lists
 - orderly arrangement of surroundings
 - daily exercise and proper diet
 - recreational therapy

Treatments

- Treat the symptoms
 - Psychosis - paranoia
 - Depression with or without anxiety
 - Restlessness
 - Mood lability
- Delay the decline

Care for the caregiver

- Support groups
- Mental health care
- Adult day care programs
- Home health agencies
- Long-term care facilities
- Respite
- Hospice personnel



What can you do?

- Recognize the illness
- Get to medical help as needed
- Acknowledge the needs of the person (privacy, respect)
- Be patient
- Simplify requests
- Do not overreact or confront

*Medical Illnesses that mimic
psychiatric conditions*



Acute Mental Status Change

- Disturbance of consciousness
 - reduced awareness of environment
 - reduced ability to focus
 - reduced ability to sustain or shift attention

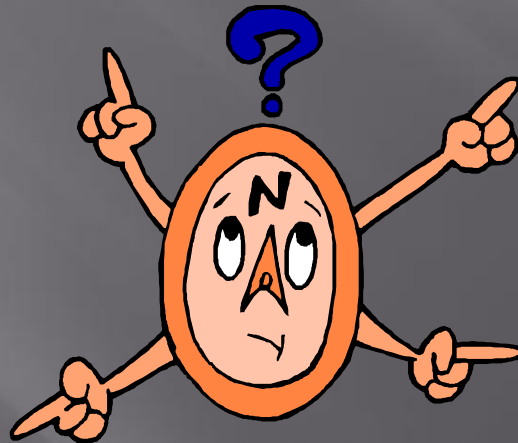


Definition of Delirium

- Change in cognition
 - memory deficit (mostly recent)
 - disorientation (mostly to time or place)
 - language disturbance (impaired naming, possibly aphasia)
 - development of perceptual disturbances (mostly visual)

Definition of Delirium

- Disturbance develops over a short period of time
 - usually hours to days
- Presentation fluctuates during the course of the day



Associated Features

- Disturbance of sleep
 - daytime sleepiness, night time agitation, poor sleep continuity
- Disturbance of psychomotor activity
 - hyperactive - agitated, psychotic
 - hypoactive - lethargic, confused
 - mixed



Associated Features

- Emotional disturbances
 - anxiety, fear, depression, irritability, anger, euphoria, apathy
 - affective lability - rapid shifts, unpredictable



Associated Features

- Nonspecific neurological abnormalities (depending on etiology)
 - Ex. Nystagmus and ataxia from medication intoxication
 - Cerebellar signs, myoclonus, generalized hyperreflexia may be seen from lithium toxicity
 - background slowing on EEG

Differential Diagnosis

- Dementia vs. Delirium or
 - delirium superimposed on dementia
- differences noted in disturbed consciousness or arousal
- differences noted in fluctuating course
- need for collateral information

Underlying Condition Assoc. with Delirium

- Metabolic
 - renal or hepatic failure
 - anemia
 - hypoxia
 - hypoglycemia
 - thiamine deficiency
 - Endocrinopathy
 - fluid or electrolyte imbalance



Underlying Condition Assoc. with Delirium

- Cardiopulmonary disorder
 - myocardial infarction
 - congestive heart failure
 - cardiac arrhythmia
 - shock
 - respiratory failure



Underlying Condition Assoc. with Delirium

- Systemic illness
 - substance intoxication or withdrawal
 - infection
 - neoplasm
 - sensory deprivation
 - temperature dysregulation
 - postoperative state



Medical Conditions

- Hypothyroidism - depression
- Hyperthyroidism - mania
- Hyperglycemia - mania, agitation
- Metabolic disturbances - psychosis, agitation (delirium)

Primary psychiatric condition?

- Alcohol withdrawal - anxiety attacks
- Alcohol, drug intoxication - psychosis
- Head injury - dementia, psychosis

Service Delivery

- ▣ Treatment of mental illness in the community can prevent institutionalization
- ▣ Untreated mental illness can turn a minor medical problem into a life-threatening and costly condition

Suggestions

- ▣ Training
 - Mental health education to non-mental health care givers

- ▣ Collaboration between agencies

- ▣ Advocate for parity of services

- ▣ More money for group homes/assisted living

In conclusion

Mental Illness in the Elderly



- ❑ Very complicated
- ❑ Confounding diagnosis
- ❑ Multiple medical problems
- ❑ Physiologic changes
- ❑ Stage of Life differences
- ❑ Very gratifying

Thank you for your attention



we can make a difference