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Understanding Dementia &
Care Options for Those Suffering with the Disease

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SouthernCare New Beacon Hospice

Objectives

- Understand Dementia
- Understand Common Problems in Caring for a Patient with Dementia
- Understand Hospice Care for a Patient with Dementia
- Open Discussion

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What is Dementia?

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Dementia is a general term that describes a disease process in the brain characterized by problems with memory, judgement, language, orientation, and executive functioning

Top 3 Types of Dementia

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1. Alzheimer's Dementia

A form of dementia that is both progressive & permanent. It's mental deterioration that is characterized by middle or old age with generalized worsening of the brain

2. Vascular Dementia

Is a change in a person's thought process (recollection and rationalizing). There are significant behavioral changes from damage to the brain with vascular disease* typically caused by restricted or blocked blood flow to the brain

3. Dementia with Lewy Bodies (DLB)

Is a type of dementia that deteriorates over time. Other symptoms may include variations in alertness, visual hallucinations, sluggishness in movement, difficulty walking, and stiffness or firmness in gait. Excessive movement during sleep, changes in behavior or mood such as depression are also common

The Dementia Diagnosis

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In order to be ***considered*** Dementia the patient must have ***at least two*** signs as listed below and they have to be ***considerably compromised***:

- Difficulty with recollection
- Communication and difficulty speaking
- Difficulty focusing
- Irrational behavior
- Decline in judgment
- Insight
- Visual acuity

Signs & Symptoms of Dementia

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Signs

- Forgetfulness
- Forgetfulness that then progresses to confusion
- Confusion that eventually progresses to disorientation

Symptoms

- Trouble with problem solving
- Judgment
- New onset of losing items
- Personality changes
  - Irritable
  - Mood swings
  - Sadness (Depression & manic episodes)

Reasons Dementia is Considered a TERMINAL Diagnosis

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- No cure
- Not expected to improve
- Expected decline

Common Problems in Caring for Patients with Dementia

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- Behaviors (anxiety, depression, resistance to care, aggressiveness)
- Aspiration
- Skin breakdown
- Pain
- Communication barriers
- Infections
- Caregiver guilt and stress
- Financial burden

Home Health or Hospice
(Handout for Reference)

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Home Health (Acute Condition)

- Can the patient improve and what kind of goals does the patient/family have?
- Treatment focuses on CURE
- Usually covered 80% with out of pocket expense
- Consider what is left for family to cover
- Must show improvement

Hospice (Chronic Failing, Life Limiting)

- Is that patient expected to decline? Maybe already declining
- Treatment focuses on COMFORT
- Covered 100% by Medicare
- Care and support are offered to the patient AND family
- Must show decline

Common MYTHS About Hospice

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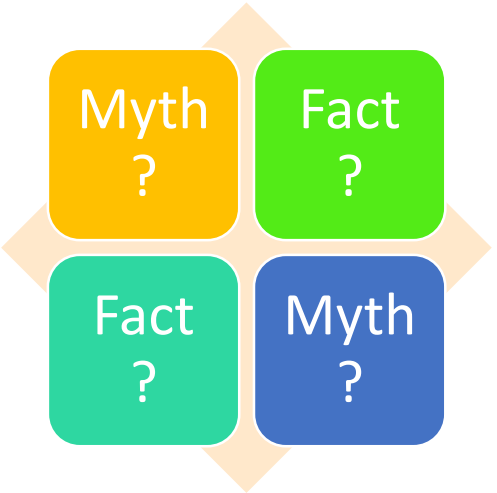
- Hospice is a place
- Hospice is for those that are close to death or actively dying
- Hospice is for only cancer patients
- A patient must sign a DNR to use hospice
- Patients must give up their doctors
- Hospice is expensive
- All hospices are the same



Facts About Hospice

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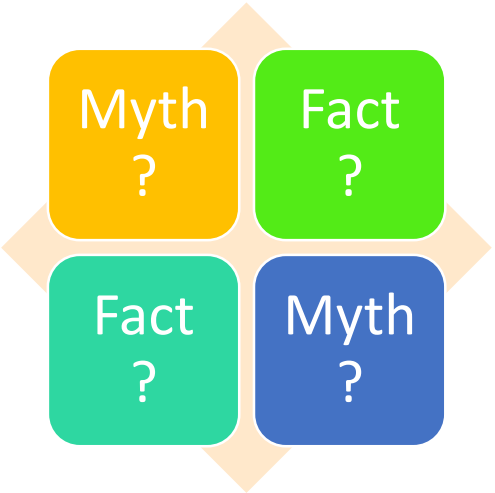
- Hospice provides services and care wherever a patient needs care. (i.e. home, personal care, long term care)
- The earlier hospice is used the more benefit the patient & the family receive
- Hospice is about living! We focus on pain and symptom management and this leads to a higher quality of life for patients with life-limiting conditions



Benefit of Hospice for Dementia Patients

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- Provides comfort and quality of life without aggressive & life sustaining care
- Close networking of care between health care team, family, and patient-easier access to care
- Education (ongoing) to help family make difficult decisions, plan ahead, and understand what is to come
- Spiritual counseling and support
- Assistance throughout the progression of the illness to include grieving
- Education to help the family understand the patient's TERMINAL condition
- Support for both PATIENT and FAMILY

The Cost of Hospice Care

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- Hospice is a Medicare benefit
- Most private insurance plans and Medicaid will cover expenses
- In addition, medical equipment and prescriptions ***related*** to the life-limiting condition are covered under these benefits
- We admit patients regardless of their ability to pay

Hospice Team

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- ✓Hospice Care Consultant
- ✓Physician/Medical Director
- ✓RNs
- ✓Social Worker
- ✓Chaplain
- ✓Hospice Aide
- ✓Bereavement Counselor
- ✓Volunteers
- ✓Other team members as needed
  PT, OT, and Dietician

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Barriers to Considering Hospice Care

- Overcoming the hospice “myths”
- Terminal phase can be difficult to predict
- Patient did not make their wishes known before cognition impaired
- Dysfunctional family
- Use of Part A days when in facilities
- Lack of education
- Insurance barriers

Overcoming Barriers for Considering Hospice

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- EDUCATION is key
- Listening…sometimes, listening AGAIN
- Earlier admission-helps to plan ahead, teaching helps navigate through what is expected, and better access to resources
- Support is provided by the hospice team throughout the hospice benefit for the patient, including support for the caregivers and family

Evaluation for Hospice Care for a Patient with Dementia

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Must look at patient's baseline and changes; hospice utilizes tools to evaluate the patient to determine appropriateness for care and in most cases, the patient is less verbal and active

- Hospice not only utilizes tools to evaluate for admission, we always consider the patient's overall condition
- Hospice looks at the BIG PICTURE considering comorbidities, as well as recent decline
- We consider what do the next 6 months (or less) look like?

Key Points for Hospice Evaluation

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- ADL decline (eating, dressing, bathing, walking/transferring, wake/sleep
- Incontinence
- Weight loss
- Frequent infections (especially respiratory and urinary)
- Frequent ER visits/hospitalizations
- Failed efforts of rehabilitation (could include home health)
- Missed MD appointments (too sick or unable to physically make them)
- Verbalization (less than 5 words)

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Virtual Dementia Tour

Used to build awareness and sensitivity in those caring for patients with Dementia by temporarily altering participants' physical and sensory abilities with props and circumstances to stimulate changes associated with physical and cognitive impairments

Audience Participation:

Journey Toward Understanding

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Thank you for your attention and participation

Questions/Comments Welcome

Please Complete the Evaluation Form

Sources

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