Concept Application: # 1 – Dementia in Older People

Definition: Dementia is the term for “a group of symptoms caused by disorders that affect the brain. It is not a specific disease. People with dementia may not be able to think well enough to do normal activities, such as getting dressed or eating. They may lose their ability to solve problems or control their emotions. Their personalities may change. They may become agitated or see things that are not there” (the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke). It includes the following different categories: Alzheimer’s dementia, vascular dementia, dementia with lewy Bodies, frontotemporal dementia, Huntington’s disease, and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. Among them, Alzheimer’s dementia is the most common.

Signs and Symptoms: See above definition. Signs and symptoms are different according to the stages, including loss of memory (recent first, then remote memory), agitation, cognitive impairment, personality changed, loss of urine and bowel control, etc.

Etiology: Many different diseases can cause dementia, such as Alzheimer’s disease and stroke. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common form of dementia. Formation of plaques in brain causes the progressive and irreversible brain damage, which eventually causes brain nerve cells shrink and die.

Incidence: According to CDC, more than 4 million Americans have dementia.

Implication for APN: Understand the disease and its progress is the key to make the diagnosis. Help patients and their family to adapt to the disease is the most important and difficult part since the disease is not irreversible. Help the caregiver to manage the daily care and to relieve the stress is challenge to APN.

Websites and Articles about Impaired Self-Care in Patients with Dementia

Websites that provide the useful information about dementia for the general audience and the health care professionals:

Alzheimer’s Association (2010). [http://www.alz.org/index.asp](http://www.alz.org/index.asp). This website provides the general information about Alzheimer for general population. It also provides the useful information for the caregivers. For the health care professionals, it provides not only the update clinical studies, but also the training programs.

National Institute on Aging (2010) [http://www.alzheimers.org](http://www.alzheimers.org). This website is the Alzheimer’s disease education and referral center of National Institute on Aging. It provides the general information about Alzheimer’s disease, and has many useful links to other resources.


The articles talk about the impaired self-care in patients with dementia:

Atichison, T. B., Massman, P. J., & Doody, R. S. (2006). Baseline cognitive function predict rate of decline in basic-care abilities of individuals with dementia of the Alzheimer’s type. Achieves of Clinical Neuropsychology, 22(1), 99-107. This article
studies the relationship between the neuropsychological tests to predict the functional decline in people with dementia.


Naue, U. (2008). ‘Self-care without a self’: Alzheimer’s disease and the concept of personal responsibility for health. *Medical Health Care and Philosophy, 11*(3), 315-324. This paper explored the impact of concept of self-care on the people who are physical and/or mental incapable. It suggests that the concepts such as personhood, wellbeing, autonomy, rationality, and normality might have to be re-thought with respective to the ageing population.


**Assessment tools for the older people with or without dementia:**

Dura, J. R., Bornstein, R. A., & Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K. (1990). Refinements in the Assessment of demential-related behaviors. *Psychological Assessment: A Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 2*(2), 129-133. This study explored the Azrit’s Memory and Behavior Problem Checklist (MBPC) associated with dementia, and it shows that correlation between MBPC and the measures of adaptive ability and level of dementia is high and positive.

Cotter, E., Burgio, L., Stevens, A., Roth, D., & Gitlin, L. (2002). Correspondence of the functional independence measure (FIM) self-care subscale with real-time observations of dementia patients’ ADL performance in the home. *Clinical Rehabilitation, 16*(1), 36-45. In this study, ADLs were assessment by comparing the caregiver report and videotaping using functional independence measure (FIM). It shows there are some overestimated of the ADL assistance time by the caregiver report.

Meaney, A. M, Croke, M., & Kirby, M. (2005). Needs assessment in dementia. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, 20*(4), 322-329. The Care Needs Assessment Pack for Dementia (CareNap-D) was used to assess patients’ needs in this study. The study shows that there are unmet needs in the community dwelling elderly with dementia by using the assessment tool.

*The Mini-Mental State Exam (MMSE)*

*Pain Assessment in Advanced Dementia (PAINAD)*