

Background Information

DEFINITIONS

Dementia is not a specific disease. It's an overall term that describes a wide range of symptoms associated with a decline in memory or other thinking skills severe enough to reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities.*

Types of Dementia*

Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia (60-80% of cases) that causes problems with memory, thinking and behavior. Symptoms usually develop slowly and get worse over time, becoming severe enough to interfere with daily tasks.

Vascular dementia affects judgment, decision making, and physical functioning and is caused by damage to blood vessels resulting in brain injury.

Lewy body dementia has similar symptoms to Alzheimer's disease but often begins with disturbances to sleep, hallucinations, muscle rigidity and Parkinson's-like movement

Mixed dementia is the occurrence of more than one form of dementia occurring simultaneously. Recent studies show that is more common than once believed

Parkinson's disease progression can often result in symptoms similar to Lewy body dementia or Alzheimer's disease

Frontotemporal dementia generally affects people at younger ages and causes change in personality, behavior, and difficulties with language

Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease is a rare, rapidly fatal brain disorder affecting memory, behavior, and coordination ("mad cow disease")

Normal pressure hydrocephalus causes difficulty walking, memory loss, and bladder incontinence and can sometimes be corrected by placing a shunt into the brain to drain fluid

Huntington's disease is caused by a defective gene on chromosome 4 which causes involuntary movements, problems with thinking, and mood changes

Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome is a memory disorder caused by a severe deficiency of thiamine usually caused by alcohol misuse.

CHARACTERISTICS OF DEMENTIA FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

- Broad awareness and recognition of the signs of dementia and how to communicate with people with dementia
- People with dementia can go about their daily activities, have a voice and make decisions, and contribute to community life for as long as possible with understanding, respect, and support from their care partners and other community members.
- People with dementia can live safely and be as independent as possible in settings that promote physical, mental, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual wellness.
- People with dementia-like symptoms can receive an accurate and timely assessment and diagnosis followed by optimal treatment, support, and care
- People with dementia and their families, friends, and care partners have easy access to supportive options, information and resources, such as education on disease process, self-care, and providing care
- Resources and support are available and accessible to all people regardless of where they live, their cultural background, or their economic status

* Alzheimer's Association, <http://www.alz.org/dementia/types-of-dementia.asp>

WHAT DOES BEING A DEMENTIA FRIENDLY COMMUNITY MEANS FOR OUR COMMUNITY?

- Share the key elements of a dementia friendly community.
- What items may address the greatest needs in our community?
- What items do we already have in place?
- Discuss the value of completing the Community Engagement Tool.
- Which questions can be addressed at this meeting?
- Which questions need further investigation?
- Who can follow up on those? Make assignments and discuss when research should be completed.
- Are there others in the community we need to involve to assess how we are currently doing as a community? Who are they and who would be the best person to contact them?
- What communication do we need to get out to our organizations/community regarding this initiative? Who will do that?

