A Systems Perspective on Dementia and Mental Health

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What is Dementia?

- It is a set of symptoms with many possible causes.
- Some causes can be effectively treated, others cannot.
Symptoms of Dementia

- Perception
- Reasoning
- Organization
- Abstract thinking
- Socially appropriate behavior
- Judgment

Symptoms of Dementia Cont.

- Attention
- Memory
- Communication
- Emotional responses
- Knowing time and place

Possible Causes of Symptoms

- Alzheimer’s disease
- Vascular damage
- Lewy Body Disease
- Diseases that target the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain
- Parkinson’s disease
Possible Causes of Symptoms Cont.

- Huntington’s disease
- Korsakoff’s Syndrome
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy

Possible Causes of Symptoms Cont.

- Delirium
- Dehydration
- Vitamin or electrolyte imbalance
- Medication side effects
- Chronic or acute pain

Possible Causes of Symptoms Cont.

- Hypothyroidism
- Sleep deprivation
- Untreated infection
- Chronic stress
Treatment of Symptoms

- Alzheimer’s and other related dementias are disease processes that result in the death of neurons.
  - Chronic
  - Progressive
  - No effective disease treatment
- Other conditions may result in the symptoms of dementia, but can be effectively treated.

Alzheimer's Disease is the 6th Leading Cause of Death in the U.S.

Major or Mild Neurocognitive Disorder (NCD)

DSM-5 new terminology
- Major NCD replaces “dementia”.
- Etiological subtypes include both major and mild form.

“Mild cognitive impairment” or “MCI” and “dementia” are still in common use.
Progression of Dementia

- The disease process that leads to the most common form of Alzheimer’s Disease (AD) begins in middle age.
- AD progression can take more than two decades.
- Others can be as short as five to seven years from onset of symptoms.

Who Gets Dementia?

- 1 in 9 people over age 65
- 1 in 3 people over age 85
- 5% are under age 65
- Women at greater risk
  • 1 in 6 women at age 65
  • 1 in 11 men at age 65
- African Americans and Latinos at greater risk

Common Challenges of Dementia

- Loss of the ability to communicate:
  • Use language
  • Understand language
  • Convey needs
- Changes to perceptions of the environment.
Loss of Ability to Communicate

- Cannot produce the correct words (amnestic).
- Cannot remember the meanings of words.

Loss of Ability to Communicate Cont.

- Cannot remember information recently provided, even from one minute ago.
- Cannot follow the thread of a conversation.

Perceptions of the Environment

As brain cells die, the brain struggles to understand the sensory input from the environment.
- Visual example
- Auditory example
Dementia Care Systems

- Any system serving older adults serves people with dementia.
- Between 70% and 80% of people with dementia live at home in the community.
- Medical, dental, legal, economic, protective, governmental and educational systems all serve people with dementia.

Systemic Challenges

- Nearly half of people living with dementia do not have a dementia diagnosis.
- Most people with dementia living in the community are “unknown” to human services systems.
- Approximately one in four people with dementia in the community is living alone.
**Systemic Challenges Cont.**

“Challenging behaviors” can be caused by a variety of situations:

- Unrecognized medical condition; delirium, pain
- Medication interactions
- Communication or perception challenges
- Behavioral symptoms such as wandering
- Emotional state of the person with dementia and/or caregiver

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**Responding to Systemic Challenges**

- Richard Peterson in Milwaukee
- Helen E.F. case
- Department of Health Services
  Dementia Care Systems Redesign Plan

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**Dementia Care Systems Redesign Plan**

It includes five areas of focus:

- Community-based services and supports
- Dementia care guiding principles and training
- Facility-based long term care
- Care for People with Significant Challenging Behaviors
- Research and data collection
2015 Assembly Speaker's Task Force

- Representative Mike Rohrkaste – Chair
- 10 other representatives
- Wisconsin Cares Legislative Package -10 bills
- Three bills pass
  - Dementia crisis unit pilot program (Act 272)
  - Expansion of the AFCSP program (Act 273)
  - Grants for mobile crisis unit training (Act 274)

Additional Systems Responses

- Silver Alert
- CIT training for law enforcement
- UW Oshkosh on-line training
  - For crisis response workers
  - Professional caregivers
  - Family caregivers

Additional Systems Responses

- 911 database residential notes
- Sherriff’s registry
- Project Lifesaver, Project Safe Return
- Dementia Care Specialists in Aging and Disability Resource Centers
- Dementia friendly communities
Questions?

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