Assessing Wandering Behavior
Who is at Risk and How Do we Intervene?
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Objectives
• Wandering – Definition and Background
• Causes/ Risk Factors
• Effects of Wandering
• Best Practices
• Care Planning
• Problem solving

What is Wandering?
A behavior of people with dementia who move about in ways that may appear aimless, but which are often purposeful.
Prevalence:

• Early to Middle Stages of Dementia.
• Estimated 11-24% of institutionalized individuals with dementia wander.
• In the U.S. approximately 34,000 Dementia patients wander out of their homes.

Facts:

• 45% of wanderers will be found dead if not found in the first 24hrs
• 83% have wandered before
• 95% are found within 1.5 miles
• One long-term care facility resident will wander away and die each week in the USA

Imagine....
Causes of Wandering

General
- Changes in memory and recall
- Decreased visual spatial capability
- Increased disorientation
- Decreased ability to communicate
- Difficulties with abstract thinking and judgement
- Difficulty relating to environment
- Decreased social interaction
- Increased pacing and motor activity

Physical Causes of Wandering
- Hunger
- Thirst
- Constipation
- Inactivity
- Urge to go to the bathroom
- Fatigue
- Pain
- Discomfort
### Causes of Wandering

#### Environmental

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific to Facility</th>
<th>In General</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate Lighting</td>
<td>New to Facility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excess Noise Level</td>
<td>Change in Personal Routine</td>
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<td>Crowded Spaces</td>
<td>Changes in Surroundings</td>
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<td>Shift Changes</td>
<td>Activities Focused on Exits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inadequate Temperature Regulation</td>
<td></td>
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#### Other Causes of Wandering

- Emotional State of Person With Dementia
  - Anxiety
  - Bored or Depressed
  - Sedating Meds
  - Little Meaningful Connections

#### Causes of Wandering at Night

- Previous Occupations
- Sleeping During the Day
- Continence Issues
- Inappropriate Lighting
Effects of Wandering on The Person with Dementia

- Fulfilling a Need
- Exercise
- Sensory stimulation
- Purposeful activity
- Searching for something or someone

Effects of Wandering on Family

Safety Issue; family assumes they will not wander from a facility.

Effects of Wandering on Facility

- Supervisory issue
- Environmental issue
- Need to alter care planning
- May have to look at their activity and exercise program
- May need additional training
- May need to add/alter wander Path
Goals for Those who Wander

• Promote Function
• Promote Dignity
• Prevent Injury
• Identify Protocol

Evaluating for Elopement Risk

• History of wandering
• History of cognitive changes/ medical conditions
• Pre-morbid lifestyle
• Change in routine and or condition
• Regular re-assessment

Assessment of Wandering Behavior

• What is the person demonstrating?
• Is there an associated behavior?
• Time of day, path taken, and duration.
• People present?
• Environment?
Assessment
- Environmental
- Rule out causes of restlessness
- Rule out medication issues
- Rule out untreated depression
- Assess communication capability
- Hearing problems
- Gait issues
- Continence issues
- Nutritional status
- Pain

Developing a Plan of Care
- Assessment
  - Information from family
  - Key questions to ask
- Care plan process

Best Practice Approach
- Environmental Modifications
- Technology and Safety
- Physical Interventions
- Psychosocial Interventions
- All Staff Education
Now What?

- Assessment
- Developing a Plan of Care
- Problem-solving

Recap and Final Thoughts