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HOSPICE PATIENT AND FAMILY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

DEMENTIA

What is Dementia?

Dementia is a broad term encompassing a group of cognitive disorders characterized by a decline in memory, thinking, communication skills, and the ability to perform everyday activities. It is not a normal part of aging but rather a syndrome resulting from various diseases and conditions that affect the brain.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Dementia?

Dementia can manifest in a variety of ways, and symptoms may vary among individuals. Common signs and symptoms include:

- Memory loss, especially recent memories
- Difficulty in problem-solving and planning
- Confusion about time, place, and familiar faces
- Challenges with communication, both verbal and written
- Struggling with familiar tasks, such as cooking or dressing
- Changes in mood, personality, or behavior
- Getting lost in familiar places
- Poor judgment and decision-making
- Withdrawal from social activities

What potential factors can cause Dementia?

Dementia can result from several underlying causes, including:

- Alzheimer's Disease
- Vascular dementia (due to reduced blood flow to the brain)
- Lewy body dementia
- Frontotemporal dementia
- Parkinson's disease
- Huntington's disease
- Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus
- Traumatic brain injuries
- Chronic alcoholism
- Thyroid problems
- Deficiency in vitamin B12
- HIV/AIDS-related cognitive impairment

What can be done for the person with Dementia?

While there is no cure for most types of dementia, various strategies can enhance the quality of life

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for individuals and their families:

- Consult with healthcare professionals for a comprehensive diagnosis and personalized care plan.
- Provide a safe and supportive living environment with minimal disruptions.
- Implement memory aids and routines to maintain a sense of familiarity.
- Engage in cognitive stimulation activities, such as puzzles and games.
- Encourage physical activity and a balanced diet to support overall well-being.
- Ensure regular medical check-ups and management of coexisting health conditions.
- Support emotional well-being through counseling and dementia-specific support groups.
- Involve family members and caregivers in the care plan, promoting consistency and collaboration.
- Consider legal and financial planning, including advanced directives.
- Explore respite care services to support family caregivers.

Regular communication with the healthcare team, adapting care strategies as needed, and providing ongoing support to both the individual with dementia and their caregivers are essential components of managing this complex condition. Additionally, connecting with dementia-specific organizations can offer valuable resources and community support.