

Dementia Awareness (Unit 1): Session 1 (3 hours)

An Overview of Dementia

The number of people with dementia in the UK is estimated as approx. 700, 000, although more recent reports suggest this figure is now over 800,000 (Alzheimers Research Trust 2010). Numbers are also set to rise dramatically in forthcoming years, possibly reaching 1 million by 2025. Although the vast majority of people are older, people under the age of 65 may also get dementia, including in rare circumstances people under 40. Dementia should not just be seen as a mental health condition, but also as a long term condition, requiring support as the condition progresses from a wide range of not only professionals, but also disciplines and agencies. As with all progressive long term conditions, there remains continually changing needs and circumstances, and as such the need for interprofessional working becomes ever more important. The aim of this preliminary session is to help you understand what is meant by the term *Dementia*.

e-tivity 1.1 (1 hour)

Purpose

To reflect on yours and other colleagues images of dementia

Task

When you hear the word dementia, what images come to you mind?

- 1) Consider what thoughts you associate with this term.
- 2) Consider what words you are familiar with when used to describe this condition, including common symptoms



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- 3) Consider your 'feelings' when working with this client group (fear, relief, concern, doubt, excitement, empathy, frustration, etc..)
- 4) Write 50 words on your thoughts in the ...**(Note to facilitator - suggest a wiki)**

Respond

Comment on a different team member's contribution... **(Note to facilitator - suggest a wiki)**. Select a different professional group from your own.

Comment, in 50 words, on how many contributions were positive reflections and how many were negative reflections.

Images of Dementia



"Alzheimers, memory and being," © 2010 OnBeing.

Found at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/speakingoffaith/4996751962/> .

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Dementia is usually associated with a range of images; unfortunately most are negative and represent the difficulties or challenges faced by this client group and their carers.

- Memory loss
- Communication difficulties, including aphasia
- Apraxia
- Agnosia
- Sometimes, personality changes
- Disorientation
- Sequencing problems
- Planning problems
- Recognition problems
- Mental health problems
- Physical health problems
- Decline in abilities over time

Pause for thought:

- Can you identify any positive images of dementia?
- Consider how people with dementia can still find enjoyment and positive experiences.
- What areas might this occur?

Comment :

You may have found it difficult to reflect on this from the perspective of the person with dementia, rather than your own. Again, don't worry if you were unable to consider many images, the main aim was to encourage you to consider what can still



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be valued by the person, and this will develop as you go through the series of Units in this series, and will help you when supporting others.

Attitudes used to express a 'giving up' approach, but it is important we consider 'potential and enjoyment' perspectives too.

Another way of understanding the symptoms of dementia, and what people can find difficult is to consider what is involved. We will later be doing a specific activity on the brain to highlight this.

e-tivity 1.2 (2 hours)

Purpose

To be able to reflect on the problems that people with dementia experience.

Task

- 1) Imagine brushing your teeth in the morning. What steps need to be completed?

Note these down as a series of steps. i.e.

Step 1 – we decide to brush our teeth.

Step 2 – Walk to the bathroom., etc.

Write these in the first column on the...**(Note to facilitator - suggest a in a wiki with two columns for learners to complete).**

- 2) To each step you identify, consider what brain activity is involved.
- 3) Consider the following words and put these in the second column...**(Note to facilitator - suggest a second column for learners to complete)**

Motivation, planning, sequencing, memory, judgement, taste, smell, concentration, fine motor skills, thinking, gross motor skills, executive function, object recognition, choice, *(you may choose to add some of your own)*



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Respond

Reply to at least two contributions from members of your team in your team as to what their role might be with a person with dementia in terms of the specific problems they experience. (**suggest 50 words**).

The previous e-tivity helped us to consider that problems with brain activity, as occurs in dementia, do not solely include memory. A number of other functions may also become affected.

The following definition is taken from the *International Classification of Diseases*, words in red may relate to some of the symptoms you have already considered.

“...a syndrome due to disease of the brain, usually of a chronic or **progressive** nature in which there is disturbance of multiple higher cortical function including **memory, thinking, orientation, comprehension, calculation, learning capacity, language and judgement**. Consciousness is not clouded. The impairments of cognitive function are commonly accompanied, and occasionally preceded by deterioration in **emotional controls, social behaviour or motivation**” ICD 10 (WHO, 1992).

Dementia is generally a progressive condition with varying signs and symptoms. As the dementia progresses, more areas of the brain become affected, resulting in changes.

References

Health Economics Research Centre (2010). *Dementia 2010. The economic burden of dementia and associated research funding in the United Kingdom* (Found at: www.dementia2010.org).

World Health Organisation (WHO) (1992). *International Classification of Disorders 10* Geneva, WHO.



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