Actions I can take--

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Interview Topics

- Role of a Geriatric Psychiatrist on the care team
- Overview of dementia progression and evolution of behavioral symptoms
- Role of psychotropic medications in symptom management
- Is there a place for the use of neuroleptics in persons with dementia?
- Dementia and end-of-life issues
- Collaborative care involving geriatric psychiatrists and nursing home staff

For additional information about improving care for nursing home residents living with dementia, please contact your Quality Innovation Network – Quality Improvement Organization

http://qioprogram.org/

Opinions expressed are Dr. Sairam's and do not reflect those of Allina Health.

Role of Geriatric Psychiatry in Caring for Persons with Dementia

Perspectives to assist nursing home staff in improving care

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How to Use This Information

This information can help you better understand dementia and the role of the geriatric psychiatrist as a part of the resident care team.

Jot down ideas of how this information will help you in your work and action steps to take.

I would like to learn more about

- Dementia results in progressive loss of cognitive and functional abilities and is eventually a fatal illness.
- Geriatric psychiatrists can be useful consultants to primary and long-term care providers by helping them in the areas of diagnosis, identification and management of psychiatric and behavioral problems.
- It is important to empower caregivers and other family members by educating them about:
  - The continuously evolving nature of dementia and the steps that can be taken to prepare for the changes associated with disease progression.
  - Behavioral symptoms and their relationship to the disease progression.
  - Executive dysfunction and its impact on the ability to use reasoning and proper judgement to ‘connect the dots.’
- Agitation is an indication of the person’s distress but causes can vary widely, and detailed investigation is necessary to identify the etiology before medications are considered.
- There is an appropriate role for psychotropic medications depending upon symptoms. Antipsychotic medications may be used to treat psychosis (paranoia, hallucinations), especially if associated with physical agitation, aggression and safety concerns. Non-antipsychotic medications, such as Trazodone, may be used for milder symptoms such as anxiety, tearfulness and restlessness, if other interventions are ineffective in relieving the patient’s distress.
- Review the patient’s clinical status and medication regimen every 3-6 months and consider tapering the medications gradually if the symptoms are controlled.
- Palliative care staff can play an important role in the later stages of the disease by offering compassionate support and guidance to the patient’s family, other caregivers and members of the treatment team.

Ideas & Thoughts

How this information will help me in my work