

The Diagnosis is Alzheimer's Disease or a Related Dementia: Now What?

Creating a Viable Plan of Care

Jean Alton, Geriatric Care Manager

Elder Care Guides

Overview

- *First steps after getting a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or related dementia*
- *Getting legal and financial affairs in place*
- *Preparing and planning for change*
- *Safety considerations*
- *Taking care of yourself*
- *Accessing community resources*
- *Looking at memory care in assisted living facilities*
- *Am I supposed to do all of this??*

First steps after getting a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia

- *Who on the medical team made the diagnosis?*
- *If not a neurologist, geriatrician or geriatric psychiatrist, seek one out!*
- *Educate yourself about the diagnosis*
- *Ask questions and take notes*
- *Identify a health care advocate to support you*
- *Acknowledge fears and concerns – talk with trusted loved ones*
- *Focus on family strengths and individual purpose*

Getting Legal and Financial Affairs in Place

- *If legal documents are not already in place, get them done ASAP, as it is a time sensitive issue with a loved one with dementia*
- *Durable Power of Attorney for Health*
- *Durable Power of Attorney for Property (finances)*
- *Will or Living Trust*
- *Advance Health Care Directives*
- *POLST form*

Preparing and Planning for Change

- *Having a general knowledge of the stages of the disease and what to expect*

Early stage:

- *Problems remembering recent events*
- *Difficulty performing more complex tasks*
- *Trouble concentrating*
- *Word finding difficulty*
- *Losing initiative*
- *Becoming more withdrawn*

- *Having a general knowledge of the stages of the disease and what to expect*

Middle/Moderate Stage

- *Short term memory loss becomes more severe*
- *Trouble understanding, concentrating and making plans*
- *Increase in confusion*
- *Safety becomes an issue*
- *More language difficulties*
- *Needing more direction and supervision with Activities of Daily Living*
- *May see increase in anxiety*

- *Having a general knowledge of the stages of the disease and what to expect*

Late Stage:

- *May not be able to speak clearly and make sense, or may not speak at all*
- *Unable to feed self, may have difficulty chewing and swallowing*
- *May be unable to walk without assistance, or may no longer be walking*
- *Incontinence of bowel and bladder*
- *Needs total assistance with bathing, dressing, grooming*
- *Direct care is needed 24/7*

Preparing and Planning for Change

- *Safety considerations:*
 - *In the Early stages: driving and when to stop, managing medication properly*
 - *In the Middle/Moderate stages: restricting access to stoves, ovens, microwaves, household chemicals, managing medications and restricting access to over-the-counter medications, managing wandering behaviors, making home modifications*
 - *In the Late stages: monitoring fall risk, restricting access to anything that may be harmful if put in the mouth or swallowed*

Safety considerations

- *Enroll in MedicAlert+Safe Return[®] program*
- *Use locks on stoves and ovens*
- *Move household chemicals and OTC medications to locked cupboards*
- *Install grab bars in the bathroom*
- *If wandering is an issue, consider installing door alarms and/or additional locks high up on the door*

Taking Care of Yourself

- *Be aware of your own health and see your doctor regularly!*
- *Consider joining a caregiver support group*
- *Ask for help when you need it!*
- *Don't try to "go it alone"*
- *Take breaks and use respite resources*
- *Expand and use your support systems*

Accessing Community Resources

- *Adult social day programs: www.glenner.org*
- *In-home care providers*
- *Support groups*
- *Transportation options: www.factsd.org*
- *Community Organizations:*
 - ✓ *Alzheimer's Association www.alz.org*
 - ✓ *Southern Caregiver Resource Center
www.caregivercenter.org*
 - ✓ *Others*
- *Geriatric Care Management*

Looking at Memory Care in Assisted Living Facilities

- *When is it time to move a loved one into a residential care facility?*
- *Acknowledging feelings of guilt, sadness, relief*
- *Looking at practicalities: cost and how to pay for it*
- *How to identify the facility that can best meet your loved ones needs*
- *Planning and managing the move*

Am I supposed to do all of this??

- *You can and many people do, but you must be prepared to:*
 - *Educate yourself throughout the disease on many things*
 - *Be forward looking and proactive*
 - *Acknowledge that planning for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease or dementia takes time and energy – two things often in short supply for caregivers*
 - *Be ready to call in professionals when needed*

Who can help?

- *A Professional Geriatric Care Manager can help you navigate the often murky waters of caregiving and managing the needs of a loved one with dementia*
- *A Geriatric Care Manager is:*
 - *A guide, advocate, and resource for families caring for older relatives*
 - *a professional with education and training in social work, nursing, gerontology or other field related to long term care*
 - *A certified professional through the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers (NAPGCM) or working towards certification*

Review

- *Initial steps to take after getting a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia*
- *Attending to legal and financial affairs*
- *Planning ahead for changing care needs*
- *Safety considerations*
- *Addressing caregiver stress*
- *Utilizing community resources and supports*
- *Looking at placement options*
- *Using a Professional Geriatric Care Manager*

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