



MENTAL HEALTH AND THE ELDERLY - THE THREE D'S

Depression – Delirium - Dementia

DEPRESSION

- Depression is a biological brain disorder
 - Depression is not a normal part of aging
 - Depression is treatable
 - 7 to 12 of all people over the age of 65 become depressed
 - Suicide is one of the 10 leading causes of death in the elderly
 - 30 - 40 % of all seriously medically ill elderly individuals suffer from depression
 - Most depressed patients cannot make themselves well
 - 70 - 90 % of depressed elderly patients will improve with medication or other treatment
 - Most elderly depressed patients can be treated as an outpatient
 - Many medications such as hypertensives cause depression
 - Some depressed elderly individuals need 3 to 4 types of therapy before they improve

DELIRIUM

- Delirium is temporary confusion or intellectual impairment from medical problems
 - Delirium is reversible and common in the elderly
 - Delirium is frequently caused by prescribed drugs such as sleeping pills, psychotropic and other mind-altering drugs
 - Delirium is very common in brain damaged individuals like Alzheimer or stroke patients
 - Major problems such as strokes, pneumonia or major surgery can cause delirium
 - Minor problems like fecal impaction, bladder infection and over-the-counter medications can cause delirium
 - Delirious patients often act out
 - Delirious patients often manifest psychiatric symptoms
 - Delirium is easy to treat ; simply fix the medical problem or stop the drug
 - Most delirious patients get better when appropriately treated
 - The average nursing home patient is prescribed 8 medications and receives between 4 & 5 medications
 - Delirious patients frequently do not get better because the delirium is unrecognized
 - The longer a patient remains delirious, the more likely there will be serious complications

DEMENTIA

- Dementia is the permanent, progressive loss of many intellectual capacities
 - There is no treatment for dementia
 - 10 % of all people over the age of 65 will suffer from dementia
 - 47 % of all people over the age of 85 will suffer from dementia
 - 40 - 60 % of all people suffering from dementia develop psychiatric complications
 - 50 % of individuals with dementia will wander off or become aggressive
 - Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia