



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