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