



## TEACHING PLAN

To use this lesson for self-study, the learner should read the material, do the activity and take the test. For group study, the leader may give each learner a copy of the learning guide and follow this teaching plan to conduct the lesson.



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will be able to:

- Know the definition and symptoms of dementia.
- Understand the relationship between Alzheimer's disease and dementia.
- Know some good ways to respond to difficult behavior.
- Know the importance of trying to understand what a patient with dementia is thinking and feeling.
- Understand the difficulties faced by someone with dementia.



## LESSON ACTIVITY

Give each learner a copy of the corresponding learning guide. Before beginning, assign one of the case studies to each of three different learners. Ask them to be ready to present the case to the group. Decide whether you are going to give the matching test or use the bingo game as an alternative, or do both if you have time.

Explain that the learners will be examining good ways to work with patients that have dementia. Encourage the learners to ask specific questions about patients they assist. Many times, other workers will have good ideas about how to help a specific patient. They need opportunities to share this information with each other.

### Section 1: Definition

1. Ask a learner to read the definition and causes of dementia from the learning guide. Determine whether the learners have any questions about this information.
2. Briefly review the "Important things to remember about dementia" in the learning guide. Mention that it might seem time-consuming to try to figure out what a patient with dementia is thinking or feeling, but the patient has the right to expect this from their caregivers. In addition, spending the time to do this will often save time and difficulty later. Emphasize that there is not one right way to help, but that each individual person has special needs and special ways of relating that must be understood.

## Section 2: Results and ways to manage

Discuss “The Results of Dementia” in the learning guide and lecture on the following ways to deal with symptoms:

### 1. Memory loss:

- a. Teach a skill by repeating the procedure in exactly the same way over and over again.
- b. Provide opportunities for the patient to perform skills he or she remembers from before he or she developed his or her impairment (folding clothes, raking, sweeping, sanding wood, stuffing envelopes, piano playing).

### 2. Language loss:

- a. It is up to the caregiver to understand and be understood by the patient.
- b. Ask direct, closed questions, not open-ended ones. For example, ask “Would you like to play cards today?” instead of asking, “What shall we do today?”

### 3. Attention loss:

- a. Remember that patients hear what we say even if they don't seem to be listening.
- b. Minimize distractions.

### 4. Judgment loss:

- a. Respect the individual's right to make his or her own decisions as you gently guide him through each step of a decision.

### 5. Loss of senses or perceptions:

- a. Provide strong visual cues. For example, silverware on a white tablecloth might be difficult to see, so use a colored cloth.

### 6. Loss of muscle organization:

- a. Start an activity for the patients at the beginning and determine whether muscle memory will take over.
- b. Male patients may be unable to get in a car on the passenger side because of habit. Let them sit on the rear left side.

## Section 3: Communication – use the guide

Review communication tips and ways to help.

## Section 4: Case studies – use the guide

Ask two different learners to present one of the case studies in this lesson to the group. Allow for discussion.



## CONCLUSION

Have participants take the test. Review the answers together. Award certificates to those who answer at least seven (70%) of the test questions correctly.



## TEST ANSWERS

- |            |          |
|------------|----------|
| 1. a       | 6. True  |
| 2. c       | 7. False |
| 3. e       | 8. False |
| 4. b, c, e | 9. True  |
| 5. d       | 10. True |

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## DEMENTIA AND ALZHEIMER'S CARE

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**Dementia** is an *organic* mental disorder involving a general loss of intellectual abilities and changes in the personality. (Organic in this sense means the disorder is caused by physical changes in the brain.) Dementia is a brain disorder that seriously affects a person's ability to carry out daily activities. It involves the parts of the brain that control thought, memory and language. Healthy brain tissue dies or deteriorates, causing a steady decline in memory and mental abilities.

**Alzheimer's disease** is the most common form of dementia with 60% to 80% of dementia being diagnosed as Alzheimer's. Approximately 5.7 million Americans have Alzheimer's. It is the sixth-leading cause of death in the United States. Late onset Alzheimer's occurs after age 65 and is the most common type. Early onset Alzheimer's occurs between age 30 to the mid-60s, with less than 10% of Alzheimer's being early onset. Both early and late onset Alzheimer's have genetic components. Early onset is an inherited genetic disorder where there is a gene mutation of the chromosomes. A child whose biological parent carries this genetic mutation has a very strong probability of developing early onset Alzheimer's. Researchers have found that patients with certain variations of a gene known as APOE can increase the risk of Alzheimer's disease by up to 12 times that of a normal APOE gene.

**Many other different disorders can cause dementia. Vascular dementia, which often occurs after a stroke, is the second most common type of dementia. Other diseases may cause symptoms of dementia, which may be reversible. This includes thyroid crisis, vitamin deficiencies, Parkinson's disease, brain tumor, head injury and alcoholism.**

Researchers have found that people with Alzheimer's have lower levels of the chemicals that carry these important messages from one brain cell to another. In addition, people with Alzheimer's have many damaged or dead nerve cells in areas of the brain that are vital to memory and other mental abilities. Although the person's mind still contains memories and knowledge, it may be impossible to find and use the information in the brain because of Alzheimer's.

Abnormal structures called plaques and tangles are another characteristic of Alzheimer's:

- **Plaques.** It is believed that plaque deposits form between brain cells early in the disease process.
- **Tangles.** This refers to the way that brain cells become twisted, causing damage and nerve cell death.

These structures block the movement of messages through the brain, causing memory loss, confusion and personality changes.

## Symptoms

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Symptoms can vary greatly, but at least two of the core mental functions below must be significantly impaired to be considered dementia:

- Memory
- Communication and language
- Ability to focus and pay attention
- Reasoning and judgment
- Visual perception

## Signs and Symptoms of Dementia

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You will recognize the following signs in many patients with dementia:

- Memory loss:
  - Increasing and persistent forgetfulness
  - Affects recent memories the most
  - Makes it difficult to learn anything new or to follow instructions
- Language loss (the meaning of words):
  - Makes it difficult to recognize words and understand complex sentences
  - Makes it difficult to express ideas
  - May use inappropriate words or curse words

**Dementia is like looking at the world — and being seen by others — through a funhouse mirror.**

- Attention loss:
  - Unable to start or stop a task
  - Pacing and agitation. Agitation often is a symptom of underlying illness or pain. Medication can also cause agitation, as can changes in the environment.
  - Easily distracted
- Judgment loss:
  - Cannot accurately assess circumstances that may be dangerous
  - Unable to see consequences of actions
  - Difficulties with abstract thinking or complex tasks. Balancing a checkbook, recognizing and understanding numbers, or reading may be impossible.