Dementia and People with Learning Disabilities

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What is dementia?

- Dementia is when parts of the brain stop working as well as they did.
- When people get dementia they seem to get older more quickly. They need extra care.
- Dementia is different from just getting older.
- It is an illness where people have problems doing their normal jobs and activities.
- There are several different sorts of dementia. The most common is called Alzheimer’s disease.
Quiz

1. How many adults are there in Surrey with Down’s Syndrome?
2. At what age can someone with Down’s Syndrome develop dementia?
3. What is the chance of getting dementia for someone with Down’s Syndrome at the age of 60?
4. What age, on average, did people with Down’s Syndrome live to in 1930?
5. What age, on average, do people with Down’s Syndrome live to now?
Quiz Answers

1. 382 adults with Down’s Syndrome
2. From as early as 35, but on average it starts when the person is in their late 40’s.
3. 1 in 2 people with Down’s Syndrome will have dementia at 60.
4. Men lived on average for 9.9 years and women for 12 years.
5. On average, people with Down’s Syndrome now live to their mid 50’s.
Number of adults with Down’s Syndrome in Surrey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Mid Surrey</th>
<th>East Surry</th>
<th>South West Surrey</th>
<th>North West Surrey</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<td>30 - 39</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>61</td>
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<td>40 - 49</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>120</td>
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<td>50 - 59</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 - 69</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>382</td>
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## Number of adults with Down’s Syndrome with diagnosed or suspected dementia

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<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Mid Surrey</th>
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<th>South West Surrey</th>
<th>North West Surrey</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>50 - 59</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 - 69</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>70 - 79</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>74</td>
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Where do people with Down’s Syndrome live in Surrey?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mid Surrey</th>
<th>East Surrey</th>
<th>SW Surrey</th>
<th>NW Surrey</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Own Home</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Home</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported Living</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential home</td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>248</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The law of disturbed encoding

- The person is no longer able to successfully transfer information from their short term memory and store it in their long term memory. This basically means that the person is unlikely to remember things that have just happened to them.

- The main consequence of disturbed encoding is that the person is unable to form any new memories for the things they experience or for things they are told.
Consequences of disturbed encoding

- Disorientation in an unfamiliar environment
- Disorientation in time
- The same questions are asked repeatedly
- The person quickly loses track of things
- The person is unable to learn anything new
- The person is unable to recall people that they have recently met
- Appointments are quickly forgotten
- Mood swings are frequent.
The law of roll-back memory

- Your long-term memory contains all the memories that you acquired throughout your life starting with your most recent memories working back to your childhood memories.
- When you develop dementia you will be unable to form any new memories after this time.
- At first your long term memories will remain intact, however as dementia progresses, long term memories will also begin to deteriorate and eventually disappear altogether.
- Deterioration of memory will begin with the most recent memories and will progress until only memories of early childhood remain, hence memory can be said to be ‘rolling back’.
Consequences of roll-back memory

- Loss of daily skills such as using kitchen appliances
- Memory loss for events beginning with the most recent e.g. last holiday
- Decreased social skills and inappropriate behavior
- Decreased vocabulary and inability to find words.
- Disorientation towards people: inability to recognise family and relatives
- The person may begin to have ‘flashbacks’ and see people from their past
- Self care skills will begin to deteriorate
- Changes in personality
- Person believes that they are younger and that time has actually ‘rolled back’
Social model of dementia

- Proposes that people have an impairment, but are disabled by the way they are treated by or excluded from society

Advantages of this framework are:
- It’s not the fault of the individual
- Focus on remaining skills rather than losses
- Person can be fully understood (their history, likes / dislikes etc)
- Supportive environment is essential
- Appropriate communication is essential
- The responsibility to reach out to people with dementia lies with people who do not have dementia.
What is the challenge?

90% of Catastrophic Behaviours in people with dementia are induced by Carers and the Environment.

Keep The Person At The Centre

- The most important tenet in caring for a person with learning disabilities with dementia is that the needs of the person are paramount.

- People with dementia need to have / be:
  - Stress free
  - Failure free
  - Individualised care
  - Consistency but without time pressures

- Staff need to:
  - Understand and know the person
  - Understand dementia
  - Think ahead and predict ‘stressors’
Establish philosophy of care

It's my life!
Philosophy of Care

- Look at the Person not the Diagnosis
- Adopt a flexible approach; Go with the flow!
- Use Regular Staff
- Promote Failure Free Activities
- Take off Time Pressures
- Communication and Memory
- Daily Living Tasks as Activities
- Remain Consistent
- Interpreting Behaviours and how to minimise them
- Planning for the Future
Go with the flow
Think about the present and future

- Be clear about what needs to be achieved.
- Consider the person's happiness, comfort, security and freedom from pain.
- Maintain relationships and family involvement.
- Change the focus of care to quality of life.
- Forget targets!
- Think about the environment, where the person lives, day activities, training for staff, baseline assessments.
- Think ahead to later stages of dementia including palliative care.
In planning for future care, it is usually in the person’s best interests to remain in their familiar setting with familiar people and routines.

Environments may need to be altered to be:

- **Calm** – noise (internal and external), colour
- **Predictable and making sense** – cues, signposting, no surprises
- **Familiar** – homely, long term memory
- **Suitably stimulating** – noise, views
- **Safe** – access, stairs, hazards
Furnishings and Fittings:
Life Story Work

- Promotes positive interactions and feelings.
- Engages the person, friends, carers and families in its preparation.
- Gives the person and their carers a clear individualised picture of the person.
- May take the form of a book or photo album, box with objects of significance
- Material needs to be well captioned with date, what the event/significance is, who is in the picture etc.
- Material should be used frequently and consistently
Different realities

- Vital that you do not cause additional stress in the way you respond
- Telling the person ‘the truth’ may be very damaging and cause stress and grief
- Remember that the person has a short term memory problem and won’t retain what has been said.
- Do not believe people who tell you that it is wrong to collude with people with dementia.
- Accept that the person may not know who you are and may become confused and distressed when you are doing things with them.
- Think about what the person wanted from telling you about the reality.
Functions of behaviours

Behaviours can have a variety of functions:

- I am confused
- It’s too noisy
- I want to go somewhere else
- Something hurts
- I want a drink
- I don’t understand what is required of me
- I’m scared
- No – I don’t want to do what you want me to do
- I’m too hot or cold
Dealing with behaviours

- Look at the situation through the eyes of the person with dementia
- View the behaviour as an attempt by the person to communicate, so interpret using all possible information
- Is this an exacerbation or return of previous behaviours?
- Is the behaviour caused by a return to a long term memory that is now inappropriate?
- Use the simplest solution available to you
- Decide if the behaviour really needs intervention.
- Environmental alterations can alter behaviours
- Decide whose reality you are dealing with.
Reading List

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As people who have a learning disability grow older, we need to ensure that support and services are geared towards meeting changing physical and mental health needs. The main objective of the guide is to promote holistic support that will maintain the abilities of the person with a learning disability and dementia and provide services that meet their individual needs. It is important that people with a learning disability and dementia: have choice and control over the support and services they receive, now and in the future. A copy of this guide included in the Supporting People with Learning Disabilities and Dementia Training Pack as background for those facilitating training programmes. Audience. People with learning disabilities may not have either passive or active reserve. Some risk factors less common in people with DS - eg smoking and ischiemic heart disease. 30 Issues with Assessment tools Assessment tools for dementia in the general population are not appropriate for people with intellectual disabilities. There is currently no agreed battery of assessments with which to assess dementia in this population and there is often great variation in screening/assessment methods. People with dementia may be severely impaired in solving problems, and their social judgment is usually also impaired. They cannot usually function outside their own home, and generally should not be left alone. People with vascular dementia tend to have risk factors for disease of the blood vessels, such as tobacco use, high blood pressure, atrial fibrillation, high cholesterol, diabetes, or other signs of vascular disease such as a previous heart attack or angina. Lewy body dementias[edit]. Main article: Dementia with Lewy bodies. Disability-adjusted life year for Alzheimer and other dementias per 100,000 inhabitants in 2004. <100. 100–120. People with a learning disability are living longer and are more likely to develop illnesses associated with older age. In addition to this, they are at a greater risk of developing dementia as they get older compared with the general population (Cooper, 1997). To improve the care environment ensure that it makes sense and is calm, familiar, predictable and suitably stimulating. For people with Down’s syndrome, the risk of developing dementia is significant and increases with age: Lai and Williams (1989) report a 55 per cent prevalence rate among 50- to 59-year-olds, while Prasher (1995) puts this at 36.1 per cent. Both studies report a 75 per cent prevalence rate for those aged 60 years and older.