What are cognitive disorders?

- Delirium
- Dementia
- Amnestic disorders

Etiology

- Delirium
  - An underlying systemic illness
- Dementia
  - Classified as to the cause or area of brain damage
- Amnestic disorders
  - Head trauma, hypoxia, encephalitis, thiamine deficiency, and substance abuse
Theories

- Genetics
  - Dementia of Alzheimer’s type
  - Dementia from Huntington’s disease
  - Dementia from Pick’s disease

Theories - continued

- Infection
  - Delirium
  - Dementia from Creutzfeldt–Jakob disease
  - Parkinson’s disease
  - Amniotic disorders

Theories - continued

- Vascular insufficiency
  - Brain tissue destroyed
  - Symptoms absent until 100–200 cc of brain tissue destroyed

- Underlying systemic illness or injury
  - Delirium
  - Amnestic disorders
Differentiating Types of Cognitive Disorders

- **Delirium**
  - Acute confusional state characterized by disruptions in thinking, perception, & memory
- **Dementia**
  - Chronic state characterized by declines in multiple cognitive areas, including memory
- **Amnestic disorders**
  - Uncommon cognitive disorder characterized by amnesia

Delirium and Dementia Differences

**Delirium**
- Fluctuating consciousness
- Varying attentiveness
- Acute
- Rapid onset
- Cause is identifiable
- Generally reversible

**Dementia**
- Stable levels of consciousness
- Steady attentiveness
- Chronic
- Slow insidious onset
- Undetermined cause
- Generally irreversible
Depression

- Depression can be masked by symptoms suggestive of dementia
- The term **pseudodementia** is used to describe the reversible cognitive impairments seen in depression
- Pseudodementia is characterized by an abrupt onset, rapid clinical course, and client complaints about cognitive failures

Assessment

**Delirium**

- Fluctuating levels of consciousness
- Disorientation and sundowning
- Impaired reasoning
- Poor attention span
- Altered sleep–wake cycle
- Alternating patterns of motor behavior

Assessment - continued

**Dementia**

- Memory impairment
- Cognitive impairment
  - Aphasia
  - Apraxia
  - Agnosia
- Poor judgment
- Decline in previous abilities
Interventions for Delirium

- Introduce self and call client by name at each contact
- Maintain face-to-face contact
- Use short, concrete phrases
- Keep room well lit

Interventions for Delirium - continued

- Keep environmental noise low
- Set limits on behavior
- 1:1 staffing as needed

Interventions for Dementia

- Gently orient the client
- Educate family about home safety
- Maintain optimal nutrition
- Bowel and bladder training
- Utilize nonverbal forms of communication
- Structure the environment to support cognitive functions
Supporting Optimal Memory Functioning

- Environmental reminders
- Reminiscence activities
- Triggers for semantic memory
- Support cognitive strengths
- Assist to cope with cognitive deficits

Caregiver Difficulties

- Wandering behaviors
- Sundowning disorientation
- ADLs
- Medication management
- Burnout and fatigue

Caregiver Resources

- Family meetings
- Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders Association (ADRDA)
- Caregiver support groups
- Attorney
- Identify community resources
- ID bracelet for the client
Self-Awareness

- Caring for clients with cognitive disorders can be difficult and frustrating at times.
- Self-awareness inventory in your text
- The responses are designed to help you to become more successful in working with cognitively impaired clients and their families.

Resources

- http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers
  The Alzheimer’s Disease Educational & Referral Centers are part of the National Institutes of Health and provide information on all aspects of Alzheimer’s disease.
- http://www.caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/home.jsp
  The Family Caregiver Alliance is devoted to providing a voice for caregivers. The site offers information on education, services, research, and advocacy for caregivers.
- http://www.med.harvard.edu/AANLIB
  This Harvard Medical School site provides images of a normal brain and of brains affected by cerebrovascular, neoplastic, degenerative, and inflammatory or infectious disease.

Resources - continued

  The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, in the National Institutes of Health (NIH), conducts and supports research on brain and nervous system disorders.
  New York Online Access to Health provides access to high-quality, full-text consumer health information in English and Spanish that is accurate, timely, relevant, and unbiased. This page is devoted to Alzheimer’s disease.