



UMH10 – Understanding dementia

Learning outcomes

LO1 Understand dementia

LO2 Understand the causes of dementia

LO3 Understand how dementia can affect individuals and others

LO4 Understand how to manage and support people with dementia



LO1: Content and Assessment criteria

- 1.1. Describe what is meant by the term dementia
- 1.2. Outline the four common types of dementia
- 1.3. Outline the signs and symptoms of dementia



Definitions and descriptions

- **Dementia** is a term used to describe a range of progressive conditions that affect the brain
- It involves cognitive and behavioural symptoms that can include memory loss, problems with reasoning and communication and change in personality
- Dementia damages the nerve cells (neurons) that communicate with each other in the brain, which affects the how the brain functions
- Dementia can affect people at any age but is more commonly diagnosed in people over the age of 65
- Developing dementia before the age of 65 is sometimes referred to as 'young onset dementia'
- It is a progressive condition which means that it gets worse over time



Dementia facts and figures

- 850,000 people are estimated to be living with dementia in the UK
- The global prevalence of people living with dementia will increase from 50m in 2018 to 152m in 2050
- There are more women living with dementia than men
- The cost of dementia in the UK is approximately £26bn
- 72% of people living with dementia also have another medical condition or disability

<https://www.dementiastatistics.org/statistics-about-dementia/>



Types of dementia

Alzheimer's disease

- This is a progressive disease. The most common type of dementia. It is a physical condition with a build-up of proteins which leads to plaques or tangles which damage the brain cells
- Eventually the nerve cells die and brain tissue is lost
- The condition affects concentration, memory, communication and word finding skills



Types of dementia

Vascular dementia

- The second most common. Occurs as a result of localised disruption to blood flow to the brain cells. These are commonly caused by strokes or mini strokes (transient ischaemic attacks (TIA))
- The death of brain cells causes problems with memory, thinking and reasoning; also referred to as cognition



Types of dementia

Dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB):

- This is a progressive condition that accounts for 10-15% of all dementia cases
- Lewy bodies are a type of protein that appear in the nerve cells in the brain. They are linked to:
 - A reduction in the levels of chemicals that carry messages between nerve cells
 - A loss of connections between the nerve cells, which then die
 - DLB affects movement and motor control. Possibly prone to falls, tremors and difficulty swallowing. Memory is less affected but there may be bouts of confusion



Types of dementia

Frontotemporal dementia (FTD):

- A less common form of dementia also known as Pick's disease or frontal lobe dementia
- A progressive condition that is linked to the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain being damaged
- This causes connections between them and other parts of the brain to break down and eventually brain tissue begins to die
- FTD can affect personality, decision making and social functioning amongst others. Affects the temporal lobes which are important for speech, comprehension and language
- **Mixed dementia:** This is a mixture of vascular dementia and Alzheimer's disease



General signs and symptoms associated with **dementia**

Symptoms specific to Alzheimer's

- Memory problems
- Asking questions repetitively
- Increasing difficulty with tasks that require organisation and planning
- Becoming confused in unfamiliar environments
- Difficulty with numbers or handling money
- Becoming withdrawn or anxious



General signs and symptoms associated with **dementia**

Symptoms specific to vascular dementia

- Symptoms are similar to Alzheimer's but memory loss may not be as obvious in the early stages
- Stroke-like symptoms, paralysis down one side of the body, muscle weakness
- Movement problems
- Thinking problems
- Mood changes, a tendency to be more emotional



General signs and symptoms associated with **dementia**

Symptoms specific to dementia with Lewy bodies

- Shares many of the symptoms of Alzheimer's but can also include:
 - Periods of being alert or drowsy, or fluctuating levels of confusion
 - Seeing things that are not there
 - Becoming slower in their physical movements
 - Repeated falls and fainting
 - Sleep disturbances



General signs and symptoms associated with **dementia**

Symptoms specific to frontotemporal dementia

- Personality changes – reduced sensitivity to others' feelings
- Lack of social awareness – making inappropriate jokes or showing a lack of tact
- Language problems – difficulty finding the right words or understanding them
- Becoming obsessive



LO2: Content and Assessment criteria

2.1. Describe the possible causes of dementia



Possible causes of dementia

- The chance of developing dementia differs from person to person. There are a number of general risk factors that can be identified:
 - **Age** – a strong risk factor for dementia
 - **Genes** – some inherited genes can make us more vulnerable to developing dementia
 - **Lifestyle choices** – sedentary lifestyles, smoking and drinking too much can increase the risk
 - **Other health conditions** – your chances of developing dementia is increased if you have another health condition, e.g. type 2 diabetes, strokes
 - **Gender** – there are currently twice as many women as men who have Alzheimer's disease



Possible causes of dementia

- Dementia occurs as a result of damage to brain cells. The possible cause for this may be events such as:
 - A lack of blood supply to the brain
 - A head injury
 - Pressure on the brain such as a tumour
 - Build-up of tissue fluid in the brain – Hydrocephalus
 - Neurological disease such as (such as Parkinson's disease, Creutzfeldt Jakob disease (CJD))
 - Some infections such as AIDS
 - Vitamin deficiency
 - Sustained excessive alcohol intake



LO3: Content and Assessment criteria

3.1. Describe how dementia can affect an individual and others



How dementia can affect the individual

- For a detailed list of symptoms see section above
- In the early stages of dementia the individual is able to enjoy life in the same way they could before a diagnosis
- As the disease worsens the individual may become anxious, stressed and scared
- Communication becomes more challenging which can be frustrating for both parties
- Independence is threatened and ultimately lost
- As well as the cognitive elements of the disease the physical elements will also start to impact. This can include being prone to falls, problems with eating and drinking and issues with using the toilet
- People experiencing dementia may have difficulty with their personal hygiene, which again impacts both parties as this is a highly sensitive issue
- Sleep is adversely affected with disruptions to the body clock



How dementia can affect others

- Caring for a relative, partner or close friend with dementia can be demanding and stressful
- It is important that the carer recognises that their needs are equally as important as the person they are caring for
- The signs and symptoms section outlines the experiences individuals have. These will impact the carer in a number of ways. As the symptoms worsen over time, the amount of care needed will increase
- The affected individual's relationships with others will change



How dementia can affect others

- The dementia sufferer may become more irritable and less patient – those close to them may find this hard to cope with
- The dementia sufferer may start to forget people's names – this can be frustrating for all parties
- The dementia sufferer's partner or adult child may become the carer – this can be hard for both parties to accept, as they once were able to care for themselves
- Individuals experiencing dementia will find it more difficult to communicate. This then becomes frustrating for both parties



LO4: Content and Assessment criteria

- 4.1. Describe the possible interventions for dementia
- 4.2. Describe the treatment options available for people experiencing dementia
- 4.3. Outline two organisations available to help with the management and support of dementia



Possible interventions for dementia

- Being physically active is beneficial for the heart, circulation, weight management and overall wellbeing
- Eating healthily has a number of benefits on conditions which may affect the progress of dementia such as diabetes, cancer, strokes and cardiovascular disease
- Quit smoking. Smoking has a number of well documented negative health impacts particularly on the cardiovascular system
- Reducing alcohol intake if consuming above government guidelines of 14 units per week
- Exercise your mind. Regular challenges for the brain may reduce risk of dementia
- Being socially active



Treatment options available for people experiencing dementia

- Talking therapies, such as counselling, can help someone come to terms with their diagnosis or discuss their feelings
- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) may be offered if the person develops depression or anxiety
- Cognitive stimulation therapy is a popular way to help keep someone's mind active
- Cognitive rehabilitation can enable an individual to retain skills and cope better



Treatment options available for people experiencing dementia

Medication

- There is a range of drugs which may be used dependent on the main type of dementia or the symptoms the person experiences:
 - The drugs used for Alzheimer's will address the specific symptoms of this form of dementia involving memory, motivation, concentration and daily living
 - Drugs used for dementia caused by Lewy bodies will be aimed at treating symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions and challenging behaviours
 - The drugs used for vascular dementia will be aimed at treating the underlying medical conditions, principally involving the cardiovascular system
 - A broad range of medications maybe used for some of the accompanying symptoms of dementia such as depression, anxiety, psychotic episodes and sleeping issues



Organisations available to help with the management support of dementia

- Dementia UK – A national charity that provides specialist dementia support for families through its Admiral Nurse service comprised of registered nurses and dementia experts
- Most Admiral Nurses work in a variety of settings, from working in the community, to care homes, hospitals and hospices
- Admiral Nurses work alongside those affected with dementia and their families when things get difficult. They offer one to one support, guidance and practical support
- Alzheimer's society – A leading UK charity which campaigns for change, funds research and supports people living with dementia
- Dementia connect – This is to be rolled out in the next few years. It will combine face-to-face support with telephone and online advice
 - <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are>





Learning check

- **Describe** how drugs can be used to treat dementia
- **Outline two** therapies that can be used to treat dementia
- **Explain two** interventions that can help to reduce the risk of developing dementia
- **Outline two** effects of dementia on an individual's quality of life
- **Outline three** possible causes of dementia
- **Differentiate** between the symptoms of Alzheimer's and Vascular dementia
- **Describe** frontotemporal dementia (FTD)
- **Explain** how damage to nerve cells affects dementia

