



**ITEC**



**VTCT**

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# Unit Specification

UMH10 – Understand dementia

Unit reference number: H/618/6290

**Level: 2**

**Guided Learning (GL) hours: 9**

## Overview

Learners will develop an understanding of dementia. Learners will explore what is meant by the term dementia, the possible causes and the impact that dementia has on the individual and others. Learners will also explore the management and treatment options that are available for people suffering from dementia.

## Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit, learners will:

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

# Unit content

## LO1 Understand dementia

### Know what is meant by the term dementia

#### Taught content

- 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, and a reduction in a person's ability to carry out daily activities, such as shopping, washing, dressing and cooking
- 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 which varies in individuals. People's individual experience of dementia will also be different  
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng97/chapter/About-this-guideline>
- Dementia facts and figures <https://www.dementiastatistics.org/statistics-about-dementia/>
  - 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

### Know the four common types of dementia

#### Taught content

- The common types of dementia are:
  - 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
  - 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

- Dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB):
  - This is a progressive condition that accounts for 10-15% of all dementia cases
  - Lew 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
- 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
- <https://www.dementiauk.org/get-support/diagnosis-and-next-steps/what-is-dementia/>

## Know the signs and symptoms of dementia

### Taught content

- Individuals will experience dementia in their own ways irrespective of the type of dementia. The symptoms can include:
  - Memory problems. Have difficulty retaining new information, may struggle with names, and get lost or forgetful. Relatives may notice the individual becoming increasingly forgetful and misplacing things
  - Cognitive ability/processing information. Difficulties with time and place. Ability to reason and make decisions may be affected
  - Communication problems. A tendency to repeat themselves or have difficulty communicating. Challenges with reading and writing
  - Personality and behaviour changes. Mood swings, anxiety and depression may be a feature. Reduction/loss of self-confidence
  - Withdrawal from activities previously enjoyed and participated in. Becoming irritable, tearful or agitated
  - <https://www.dementiauk.org/get-support/diagnosis-and-next-steps/what-is-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
- Symptoms specific to vascular dementia
  - Symptoms are similar to Alzheimer's but memory loss may not be as obvious in the early stages. Symptoms are often quite sudden and worsen quickly but they can also develop over a period of time
    - Stroke like symptoms, paralysis down one side of the body, muscle weakness
    - Movement problems
    - Thinking problems
    - Mood changes, a tendency to be more emotional
- 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
- 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
- As dementia progresses symptoms become severe. In the later stages, the person is likely to neglect their own health, and require constant care and attention
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia/symptoms/>

## LO2 Understand the causes of dementia

### Know the possible causes of dementia

#### Taught content

- 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
- 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
  - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/d/dementia>
- Ultimately dementia is not a single disease

## LO3 Understand how dementia can affect individuals and others

### Know how dementia can affect an individual and others

#### Taught content

- Effects on 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
- Effects on 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
  - 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
- As the dementia worsens over time a carer provision may become almost a full time role. This might be the partner or family member or even close friend. The carer will need support and should register as such with their GP. This then gives access to a carer's assessment which can help with training and support. There is also the evaluation of eligibility for benefits
- The carer can eventually become intrinsically involved in many aspects of the dementia sufferers daily life from washing, toileting, help with shopping and chores. They may need to put reminders around the house and check for items that risk health and safety such as leaving ovens switched on

## LO4 Understand how to manage and support people with dementia

### Know the possible interventions for dementia

#### Taught content

- Getting older is the major risk factor for dementia. There is however evidence to suggest that there are things that one can do to reduce risk and this revolves around being active, eating healthily and exercising the mind
- <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/risk-factors-and-prevention/how-reduce-your-risk-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. Learning a new language appears to be particularly beneficial. <https://www.dementiauk.org/get-support/diagnosis-and-next-steps/what-is-dementia/>
- Being socially active in groups and one on one situations
- <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/risk-factors-and-prevention/how-reduce-your-risk-dementia>

### Know the treatment options available for people experiencing dementia

#### Taught content

- Treatment options consist of support and drug treatments which should become available post diagnosis. Initially this will include advice and information on what support is available
- 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. CBT is a talking treatment which focuses on how thoughts, beliefs and attitudes affect feelings and behaviour, and teaches individuals coping skills for dealing with different problems
- Cognitive stimulation therapy is a popular way to help keep someone's mind active. It involves doing themed activity sessions over several weeks
- Cognitive rehabilitation can enable an individual to retain skills and cope better. Developing ways to create routines such as use of pill boxes to aid with ongoing memory loss
- Many people with dementia enjoy life story work, in which the person is encouraged to share their life experiences and memories. These activities can help promote mood and wellbeing
- <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/types-dementia/treatments-dementia>
- Medication
  - There is no cure for dementia but there are drugs which can help with the symptoms of dementia or slow the progress of the symptoms
  - 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 may be used for some of the accompanying symptoms of dementia such as depression, anxiety, psychotic episodes and sleeping issues
- <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/types-dementia/treatments-dementia>

## Know the organisations available to help with the management and support of dementia

### Taught content

- 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. It helps families in the present and also helps them face future challenges with more confidence
- The Admiral nurses can
  - Pass on skills and techniques to help stay connected with the sufferer when communication becomes difficult
  - Help with management and prevention strategies when fear and distress become an issue
  - When families struggle to cope, then Admiral Nurses can help access the best possible care
- <https://www.dementiauk.org/get-support/admiral-nursing/>
- Alzheimer's society – A leading UK charity which campaigns for change, funds research and supports people living with dementia
  - They provide support in the following ways
    - National dementia helpline. Provides information, advice and emotional support to anyone affected by dementia
    - Talking Point. A free online 24hr community where people can ask questions, share experiences and get practical advice on living with dementia
    - Group services: A range of support services to help those affected by dementia the right support, advice and information at the right time. The service aims to:
      - Improve confidence and motivation
      - Provide reassurance
      - Allow people affected by dementia to get advice and information from experienced staff



- 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 and information, offered by specially trained Dementia Advisors
- <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are>

### **Guide to taught content**

The content contained within the unit specification is not prescriptive or exhaustive but is intended to provide helpful guidance to teachers and learners with the key areas that will be covered within the unit and relating to the kinds of evidence that should be provided for each assessment objective specific to the unit learning outcomes.

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# Assessment requirements

## 1. Knowledge outcomes

Learners must complete an external theory examination for this unit. This will consist of a multiple-choice question paper which is mapped to the relevant assessment criteria stated below. The theory examination will test the knowledge and understanding from across learning outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Learners should use the unit content sections of this unit to aid revision since exam questions will test the full breadth of content over time.

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Assessment requirement
LO1 Understand dementia	1.1. Describe what is meant by the term dementia	External theory examination
	1.2. Outline the four common types of dementia	
	1.3. Outline the signs and symptoms of dementia	

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Assessment requirement
LO2 Understand the causes of dementia	2.1. Describe the possible causes of dementia	External theory examination

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Assessment requirement
LO3 Understand how dementia can affect individuals and others	3.1. Describe how dementia can affect an individual and others	External theory examination

Learning Outcome	Assessment Criteria	Assessment requirement
LO4 Understand how to manage and support people with dementia	4.1. Describe the possible interventions for dementia	External theory examination
	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	

## Document History

Version	Issue Date	Changes	Role
v1.0	01/04/2021	First published	Product and Regulation Manager