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Alzheimer's Dementia and Occupational Therapy

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Alzheimer's Dementia and Occupational Therapy

What is Alzheimer's?

- A progressive disease affecting the brain consisting of an accumulation of plaque and tangled fiber bundles that disrupt cell communication ⁶
- Alzheimer's is one of several types of dementia
- In 2022, an estimated 6.5 million people over the age of 65 (about 1 in 9) were living with Alzheimer's in the US ¹
- 10.3% men and 20% of women 65 years of age or older will develop Alzheimer's ¹
- Outlook: It typically develops at age 65 or older. The severity and rate of decline is variable, and it lasts until the end of life ²
- Common conditions associated with Alzheimer's: restlessness/agitation, bowel/bladder problems, falls, infections, depression, malnutrition/dehydration ²



Above ⁵ : a person with Alzheimer's and their occupational therapist

Signs You or Your Loved One May Have Alzheimer's ⁸

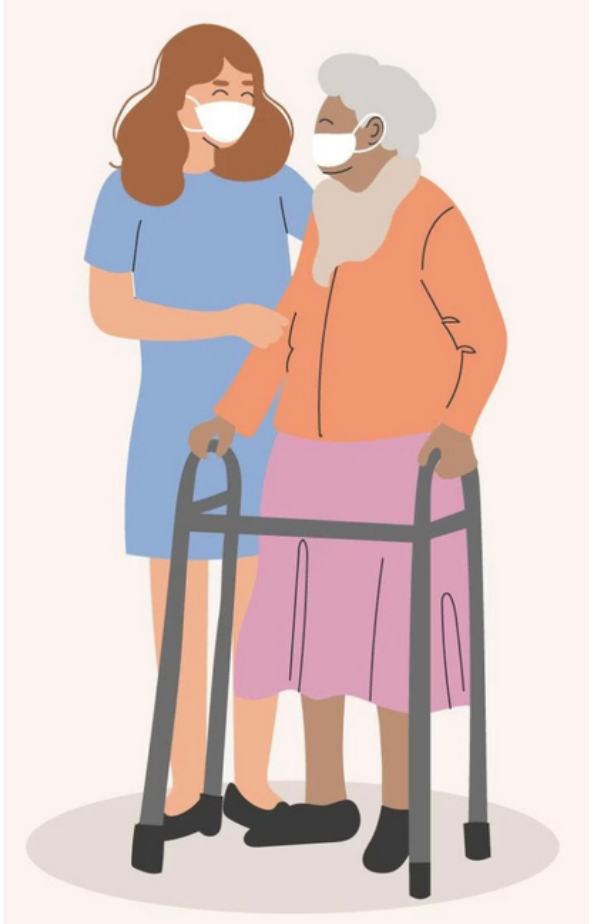
- Memory loss/impairment
- Mental confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Personality & behavior changes; including depression & irritability
- Physical changes - such as decreased muscular strength, vision, and appetite
- Changes in blood pressure & heart rate

Impact of Alzheimer's on everyday life ²

- Difficulty remembering & learning new things
- Decreased participation in activities that one used to enjoy
- Increased neglect of self care and chores
- Aversion toward food which can lead to weight loss

Role of Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy is an appropriate service for people with Alzheimer's dementia and their families/caregivers to help increase their participation in daily activities, such as those related to self-care, socializing, and leisure.



Above ⁵ : a woman with a walker and her occupational therapist

Examples of OT Interventions

- **Fall Prevention Assistive Technology**⁹
 - wristbands that can detect changes in acceleration/orientation and alert caregivers of a fall or behaviors associated with agitation
- **Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST)**²
 - program featuring simple, familiar activities tailored to the individual's interests which can help maintain or improve cognitive, emotional, and physical functioning
- **Task Simplification**² - simplifying tasks to make them more accessible by having a caregiver prepare materials sequenced in the order that they will be used, providing visual cues and concise verbal directions

Potential Assessments

- **Mini-Mental Status Examination** ³ - a brief exam to assess cognitive function
- **Disability Assessment for Dementia Scale (DAD)** ⁴ - measures the functional abilities in daily activities

Resources

Handout by Sofia Demušaj, Averee Ortiz, and Laura Swanson OT24

1. Alzheimer's Association (2022). Alzheimer's disease facts and figures
2. Dirette, D. P., (2021). Occupational therapy for physical dysfunction
3. Folstein M. (1975). Mini-mental state: a practical method for grading the cognitive state of patients for the clinician
4. Gelinas, I. (1994). Disability Assessment for Dementia
5. Images by Freepik https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/collection-volunteers-helping-elderly-people_8785684.htm
6. Keene, C. D. (2022). Epidemiology, pathology, and pathogenesis of Alzheimer's disease
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