

Teaching Notes for Dementia in Nursing Home Residents: Findings and Issues in Current Research

Developed by Anna Scheyett, MSW, LCSW, Clinical Assistant Professor

Slide 1

This lecture material will be of interest to social workers in aging, health, and mental health. Some of the material may also be of use in classes on human development. The material presupposes a basic understanding of dementia and its symptoms.

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Discussion Questions

- What is your response to these statistics--any surprises?
- What are the implications around demand for dementia care in the future?
- If up to 1/2 of all nursing home residents have dementia, how might we have to adapt nursing home care to truly meet individual needs?

References

- ¹Strahan, G. (1997). An overview of nursing homes and their current residents: Data from the 1995 *National Nursing Home Survey* (Vital and Health Statistics, Advance Data No. 280. DHHS Pub No, [PHS] 97-1250 7-0122, 1/97). Hyattsville, MD: Center for Health Statistics.
- ²Kemper, P. & Murtaugh, C. (1991). Lifetime use of nursing home care. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 324, 595-600.
- ³Rovner, B. *et al.* (1990). The prevalence and management of dementia and other psychiatric disorders in nursing homes. *International Psychogeriatrics*, 2, 13-24.

Slide 3

Introduce overview for the lecture, emphasizing the importance of good research if social workers are to engage in effective evidence based practice.

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Group Activity

Ask participants to break into small groups of 4-6. Ask each group to develop what they consider to be an ideal diagnostic process for someone with dementia. Remind them to specify who should perform each part of the assessment. Then ask them to estimate the full amount of time this assessment process would take, including travel time to see collaterals, etc.

As a large group, have them report out, then ask

- If you were translating this time into costs for a study containing 5000 subjects, what would your personnel budget need to be?
- Given limited resources, what might you eliminate or do differently, yet still feel the diagnosis was not compromised?

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This study described a new process for diagnosing and assessing dementia in large populations. The process was used to assess over 2400 new admissions to 59 nursing homes in Maryland.

The process relies on an expert panel, reviewing data collected by trained lay evaluators.

Reference

Magaziner, J., Zimmerman, S., German, P., Kuhn, K., May, C., Hooper, F., Cox, D., Hebel, J., Kittner, S., Burton, L., Fishman, P., Kaup, B., Rosario, J., Cody, M. (1996). Ascertaining dementia by expert panel in epidemiologic studies of nursing home residents. *AEP*, 6, 431-437.

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In this study the panel was composed of the professionals identified in the slide, initial review of data was by 2 members of the panel, with full panel reviewing cases where there were differences of opinion between the 2 initial reviewers. Indeterminate was used for cases where diagnosis could not be determined because of lack of data.

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To confirm the effectiveness of this assessment model, 100 individuals were fully evaluated by a geriatrician, and the results compared with diagnoses given by the panel.

Though overall agreement was moderate, it was similar to inter-rater reliability in other studies where 2 clinicians assessed older adults. Thus, the model is an effective diagnostic process for large scale research projects.

Slide 8

Make sure all students understand “proxy”

Activity (Do before this slide is shown)

Ask the group to list as many advantages and disadvantages to proxy derived information, and performance based information, with an emphasis on pros and cons in *research*.

Reference

Zimmerman, S., & Magaziner, J. (1994). Methodological issues in measuring the functional status of cognitively impaired nursing home residents: The use of proxies and performance-based measures. *Alzheimer Disease and Associated Disorders*, 8, S281-S290.

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Discussion Questions

What are some characteristics of proxies which might influence their views of client functioning, and how might they be influenced?

What topic areas might be the most difficult for proxies to answer accurately?

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Could spend a little time discussing various types of performance based measures.

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Discussion Question

How might a performance based measure not reflect a demand of the actual environment in which a person lives?

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Make sure students understand why definitional clarity is essential in good research. Describe some of the variability in special care units--some focus on safety and containment, others on maximizing functioning, etc.

As will be discussed later, people with dementia in nursing homes are a heterogeneous group, and the characteristics of the population must be understood and described in order to understand the full meaning of the research results.

Clarity around outcome goals is essential when measuring intervention effectiveness, and in dementia there can be many different potential outcome goals.

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Discussion Question

What are the practice implications of these statistics?

Reference

Magaziner, J., Zimmerman, S., Fox, K., Burns, B. (1998). Dementia in United States nursing homes: Descriptive epidemiology and implications for long-term residential care. *Aging and Mental Health, 2*, 28-35.

Magaziner, J., German, P., Zimmerman, S., Hebel, J., Burton, L., Gruber-Baldini, A., May, C., Kittner, S.. (2000). The prevalence of dementia in a statewide sample of new nursing home admissions aged 65 and older: Diagnosis by expert panel. *The Gerontologist, 40*, 663-672.

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Continue discussion with this information.

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Group Activity

Ask students to break into groups of 4-6. Ask each group to develop a case example of a person with dementia--it does not have to be "typical" as per the data in prior slides, and can be based on someone they know.

As a large group, read the case examples, and discuss their similarities and differences. What services/accommodations will be needed by all of the, and what specialized services may some of them need?

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This study looked at over 2000 nursing home residents in Maryland, about half of whom had dementia. By chart and other documentation review, data on medical care were collected and analyzed.

Discussion Question

What are possible reasons for these differences (listen for "less medically fragile" and "staff less aggressive about treating illnesses because of views of dementia").

Reference

Burton, L., German, P., Gruber-Baldini, A., Hebel, J., Zimmerman, S., Magaziner, J. (2001). Medical care for nursing home residents: Differences by dementia status. *Journal of the American Geriatric Society, 49*, 142-147.

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In study no element was exhibited by all residential facilities

Discussion Question

Why are each of these elements important in the care setting of people with dementia, and what are some ways to operationalize each element?

Reference

Zimmerman, S., & Sloane, P. (1999). Optimum residential care for people with dementia. *Generations, Fall*, 62-68.

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In this study, special care unit coordinators were interviewed and asked to rank the elements of philosophy of care for people with Alzheimer's, based on a list developed from literature review. These are the elements most highly rated.

Discussion Question

Are any of these elements in conflict with each other? Which? How? What to do to resolve the conflict?

Reference

Zimmerman, S., Sloane, P., Gruber-Baldini, A., Calkins, M., Leon, J., Magaziner, J., Hebel, J. (1997). The philosophy of special care in Alzheimer's special care units. *Journal of Mental Health and Aging*, 3, 169-181.

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In the study, researchers observed behavior and treatment in the special care units, and compared this with the professed philosophy.

The data above compare the special care units with directors who strongly supported each element, against the observations of that unit. Great disparity between professed belief and actual treatment was noted.

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Discussion Question

What could be the effect of poor lighting, varied lighting, high noise levels, and pulse noise on people with dementia?

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This slide summarizes the lecture, and applies to practice. Even though students may not do large scale research studies, they should keep the advantages and disadvantages of proxy versus performance measures in mind as they develop an assess process with their clients.

Emphasize heterogeneity, uniqueness of each individual, and individually tailored service planning.

Emphasize role as advocate for people with dementia--in access to medical care, in dementia-sensitive residential environments.