Crossing the Sacred Bridge With People Who Have Dementia: Enhanced Communication Techniques

Fact Sheet: Beer and McLain Cox, 2010, 2013

Dementia is a neurodegenerative disease, involving progressive deterioration in memory, language, ability to reason, behavior, personality and emotions. Alzheimer’s disease accounts for 60-70% of all dementias

Symptoms: confusion, hallucinations, agitation, anxiety, depression, memory loss

Dementia affects cognition, language and memory centers (Alzheimer’s Association, 2009)

Advanced Stage: patients need skilled nursing care (Alzheimer’s Association, 2009)

Late stage dementia residents in nursing homes spend 10-20 minutes per day involved in meaningful communication (Kovach & Magliocco, 1998)

Advanced dementia patients who suffered the same type of hip fracture as cognitively intact patients received 1/3 the pain medication (Morrison & Siu, 2000)

There are 5.2 million people with Alzheimer’s disease in the U.S. today with 19 million caregivers (Alzheimer’s Association, 2013). 15 million family members, friends, and neighbors give unpaid care.

13.8 million Americans will have dementia by 2050 (Alzheimer's Association, 2013)

The US currently spends over $200 billion annually on dementia care. If we paid those who care without remuneration we would add on $210 billion more. 80% of care is delivered at home by family. (Alzheimer's Association, 2012)

Studies indicate that people 65 and older survive an average of four to eight years after a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease, yet some live as long as 20 years with Alzheimer’s.(93-97) This indicates the slow, insidious nature of the progression of Alzheimer’s.

In 2010, Colorado had 72,000 residents with Alzheimer’s Disease. By 2025 (12 years from now) Colorado will have over 110,000 cases. (Alzheimer's Association, 2012)

All behaviors are attempts to communicate:
Non-drug approaches should be used first in behavior and pain management (Tilly & Fok, 2007)

Alzheimer's Association http://www.alz.org
National Institutes of Health/Alzheimer's http://www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers/