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Hospitals



Older adults living with dementia have three times more hospitalizations, four times more hospital stay days, and nearly three times more emergency department visits than other older adults. You can take practical steps to improve care for individuals living with dementia and create dementia friendly environments in your acute care setting. \*

Interacting with People Living with Dementia

* Always introduce yourself before every interaction with the person, speak slowly and clearly, and maintain good eye contact.
* Give the person time to respond. Don’t interrupt or finish sentences.
* Listen with empathy and seek to understand the person’s reality or feelings.
* Treat the person living with dementia with dignity and respect.
* Connect on an emotional level even if the conversation topics shift or do not make sense to you.
* Engage the person in one-on-one conversation in a quiet space with minimal distractions. Ask a question that requires a “yes” or “no” answer.

Providing Continuity of Care1

* Do hourly comfort and safety rounds and try to keep the staff care consistent for the individual living with dementia. Use a color-coded gown system to identify patients living with dementia.
* Get baseline behavior information from the patient’s family and care partners and have a plan in place to recognize, assess, and intervene when a patient living with dementia exhibits a type of responsive or reactive behavior.
* Provide Alzheimer’s disease information and a resource list to families/friends and care partners.
* Continually assess medications and educate families on medication use and management. Encourage questions, especially regarding discharge.

\*Adapted from 50 Ways to Become a Dementia Friendly Hospital, Alzheimer’s Association St. Louis Chapter

* Effectively communicate and coordinate care with the family and post-discharge providers.
* Provide dementia education and training for all staff and volunteers. Find training resources at: https://www.dfamerica.org/provider-tools

Focusing on Person-Centered Care1

* Consult the family about what the patient living with dementia enjoys and what scenarios may cause responsive behaviors.
* Develop standardized care plans for patients living with dementia that can easily be customized.
* Allow the patient living with dementia to have a familiar item. Know their favorite foods and make snacks available.
* Post nicknames and address the patient living with dementia by their preferred name.
* Ask families for feedback, such as “what can we do for you” and “what can we do better.”
* Allow open visiting hours and have quiet rooms for care partners to encourage self-care and respite.
* Offer music, pet, and aroma therapy services.
* Offer occupational, physical, and speech therapy services as needed.
* Train volunteer companions to work with patients living with dementia.

Adapting Physical Spaces

* Have a specific “dementia friendly” unit with specialized staff. Allow patients living with dementia to have a private room when possible.
* For ambulatory patients living with dementia, have a common dining room for eating with a companion.
* Reduce noise in/around the room of the patient living with dementia.
* Hang a calendar and refer to it.
* Provide safe room arrangements to prevent falls and wandering. Label each room with recognizable symbols, such as a toilet to identify the bathroom.
* Designate a room near a nurse’s station where patients living with dementia and their family/care partners can gather.

References

1. **Provider Practice Tools  
   Managing Dementia Across the Continuum** <https://www.dfamerica.org/provider-tools>  
   <http://www.dfamerica.org/s/DFA-Tools-MidLateStage.pdf>
2. **24/7 Helpline, 1-800-272-3900**  
   [http://www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org/)
3. **National Institute on Aging: Elder Abuse**

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/elder-abuse>

1. **CARES Dementia-Friendly Hospitals: Preventing Adverse Events**

<https://training.hcinteractive.com/hospitals#:~:text=The%20CARES%C2%AE%20Dementia%2DFriendly,elder%20abuse%2C%20and%20hospital%20readmissions.>

1. **Dementia Friendly Hospital Initiative**

<https://dfmassachusetts.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2019/06/Alzheimers-Association-St.-Louis-Chapter-Dementia-Friendly-Hospital-Initiative.pdf>

1. **Dementia Friendly Hospital from a Universal Design Approach**

<https://dementia.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/UD-DFH-Guidelines-2018-Full-doc-lw-res-compressed-A1.pdf>

**Culturally Aware Dementia Practices**

1. **How Race and Culture Affect Dementia Care**

<https://www.webmd.com/alzheimers/race-culture-alzheimers-care>

1. **Cultural and Religious Needs of People Living with Dementia**

<https://www.scie.org.uk/dementia/living-with-dementia/keeping-active/culture-religion.asp>

1. **Culturally Sensitive Dementia Care**

<https://www.alz.org/national/documents/asianoutreach_tipsandcitations.pdf>

Additional Resources

For additional resources related to the *Hospital* sector and a host of other community sectors, please visit [DFA's resource page](https://dfamerica.org/resource-listing/).

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Hospitals are just one important part of the community. Working alongside other community sectors and health care professionals can help the whole community become more dementia friendly. Learn more about the process and help your community and others become more dementia friendly at dfamerica.org.