



# CONNECTING MINDS

## DEMENTIA CARE NEWSLETTER

Published by Dementia Network Algoma

December 2005

### Effective Communication

Communication is the exchange of ideas through speech, writing and behaviour. It involves sending, receiving and interpreting a message. To send a message effectively one must be able to process an idea, put it into words and express the idea with body language that reinforces the message. The receiver must be able to hear or see the message and have the ability to translate the information into a meaningful message.

Through the progression of dementia these communication skills deteriorate. Due to **amnesia** (memory loss) the person with Alzheimer Disease and related dementia (ADRD) may forget specific words, or people's names (including family members), may describe an object rather than name it, and may not be able to remember parts of the conversation. If the person with ADRD is bilingual he may revert back to the language he first learned. Repetition of words, statements and questions is common.

**Aphasia** is the loss of language including both speech and comprehension. Aphasia affects the ability to process language. A person with ADRD is gradually losing vocabulary, which means he will have difficulty understanding and/or finding the right word. He may also interpret the exact meaning of words. For example, if you tell your client to "*Jump* into the bath" he will think that you actually want him to *jump*. Following a conversation may be difficult and the person with ADRD may have difficulty keeping track of which person to attend to. He may also fill in gaps in memory and create his own interpretation to make the conversation make sense to him.

**Apathy** makes the person with ADRD less sensitive to his conversation partners. He may be less interested in initiating and carrying on a conversation and may become easily distracted.

What you can expect throughout the stages of Alzheimer Disease:

Early Stage	Middle Stage	Late Stage
Word finding problems	Repetitive speech	Reading and writing abilities are lost
May make up experiences and wander off topic	Vague or inappropriate speech	Difficulty expressing emotions
Difficulty with abstract thinking	Little facial expression	Responsive to non-verbal communication
May not be able to detect humor or sarcasm	Increased memory lapses	Communicates at an emotional level
May use intact social skills to provide standard responses	May have difficulty understanding	
May be aware of difficulties	May speak more about past events	

The quality of life of individuals with ADRD is dependent on their interactions with others. It is important to treat people with ADRD as adults and maintain a connection. Remember, a person with ADRD is living in the moment and your response in the moment is what brings joy and satisfaction to their lives.

## TIPS

When communicating with clients with dementia it is important to consider the following tips:

- Always approach from the front, make eye contact, introduce yourself and orientate your client to the situation.
- Do not use pronouns, instead use actual names of people and objects.
- Offer limited choices and use questions that can be answered with a yes or no.
- Speak slowly and clearly giving one instruction at a time keeping instructions simple.
- Repeat instructions, using the same words.
- Allow enough time for a response.
- Always speak in the positive and use a positive tone of voice.
- Eliminate distractions and reduce background noise.
- Use all methods of communication including facial expression, body position, gesture, tone of voice and touch.
- Never pretend you understand if you don't.

## EVENTS & EDUCATION

### Introduction to Dementia Care

This certificate program consists of three, two hour sessions. The topics covered are an overview of dementia, communication, ABC's of behaviour management, responsive behaviours, solving bathing problems and sexuality. For more information or to register call Sault College at 759-2554.

### Alzheimer Society Annual Conference

#### *Enhancing Quality of Life in Late Stage Dementia*

Wednesday February 22, 2006, 8:30-4:30

Riuniti Banquet Hall

Cost: \$35.00 if registering before February 3, 2006

Key note speaker is Dr. Michael Gordon, Head of Geriatrics at Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care, who will be speaking on ethical issues. Other topics include Advance Care Planning, Pain & Symptom Management, & Grief.

Call the Alzheimer Society at 942-2195 to register

## HANDWASHING

As a caregiver, a major part of your work involves contact or touching your clients. This means you also come into contact with a number of pathogens. Handwashing is the number one way to reduce the spread of disease-causing microorganisms and to protect your client, yourself and those around you from infection. It is recommended that you wash your hands:

- When they are obviously soiled.
- Before and after contact with a client.
- Following contact with any source of a microorganism on a person or object that might be contaminated.
- Before performing tasks with a client.
- After removing gloves.

Handwash supplies include:

**Soap**—bar, liquid or soap-filled wipes (note: bar soap should be in a holder with drain holes and the holder should be cleaned before replacing the bar)

**Paper towels** are preferred or use a clean towel not shared with others

**Warm running water**, standing water does not wash away pathogens

**Nailbrush**

**Trash container**

### Good Handwashing Techniques

- Keep your fingernails short.
- Remove jewellery from hands and arms.
- Check your hands for breaks in the skin.
- Stand directly in front of the sink—do not lean on the sink.
- Use paper towel to turn on the water.
- Use warm water not cold or hot.
- Wet your hands and hold your arms under the running water.
- Apply soap and lather well being sure to get under your nails.
- Wash from cleanest to dirtiest.
- Rinse hands and arms with warm running water.
- Use paper towel to dry hands and arms.
- Turn off the water using a paper towel.

Source: JEL Health Education Ltd (2002). Reducing the Spread of Infection.

## RESOURCES

[www.piecescanada.com](http://www.piecescanada.com) P.I.E.C.E.S

[www.u-first.ca](http://www.u-first.ca) U-First

[www.alzheimer.ca](http://www.alzheimer.ca) Alzheimer Canada

## Evaluation and Feedback

To ensure that this newsletter is an effective source of information for you, your feedback is important to us. Please visit our website [www.dementiaalgoma.org](http://www.dementiaalgoma.org) and fill out the evaluation.