Supporting Brain Health for People Living with Dementia: A Lifespan Approach for Interprofessional Collaborative Practice

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Objectives

At the end if this session participants will be able to:

- Explain the influence of at least three modifiable and three non-modifiable factors on brain health across the lifespan relevant to dementia care.
- Describe the role of physical therapists and PTAs in recognizing and managing brain health in individuals living with dementia and their caregivers.
- Appreciate benefits of an interprofessional collaborative model when working with individuals living with dementia.
- Apply two evidence-based brain health strategies into the interprofessional care plan for people living with dementia.
- Practice effective interprofessional communication techniques to support caregivers and individuals with dementia across care settings.

NON-MODIFIABLE DEMENTIA RISK FACTORS

- Age – increased age, increased risk
- Family History – positive family history, increased risk
- Genetics – genetic variants, increased risk

MODIFIABLE DEMENTIA RISK FACTORS

Livingston, G., Huntley, J., Liu, K. Y., Costafreda, S. G., Selbæk, G., Alladi, S., ... & Mukadam, N. (2024). Dementia prevention, intervention, and care: 2024 report of the Lancet standing Commission. *The Lancet*.

- Degree of education attained
- Hearing loss
- Cardiovascular: Hypertension
- Cardiovascular: High LDL cholesterol
- Smoking
- Obesity
- Depression
- Infections
- Physical inactivity
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Air pollution
- Social isolation
- Untreated vision loss
- Diabetes
- Excessive alcohol consumption

DIANE AND MARY

Diane is a 67-year-old retired teacher who lives with her friend, Mary, 72, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease three years ago. During a routine healthcare visit, Diane reports increasing fatigue, poor sleep, and intermittent low back pain that has worsened over the past six months. She notes that she has stopped attending her weekly walking group because she is "too busy at home.“

When discussing her daily routine, Diane shares that she manages the household finances, prepares all meals, supervises Mary's medications, accompanies her to appointments, and frequently assists her when she becomes confused or unsteady. She describes several recent situations in which she had to physically guide or support Mary when she attempted to leave the house or became lost in the neighborhood. Despite these responsibilities, Marilyn states, "I'm not really a caregiver. I'm just her best friend – we would do anything for each other."

Further assessment reveals that Diane has reduced her own medical appointments, experiences occasional balance concerns when helping Mary transfer from chairs, and reports feeling isolated from friends and family. She worries about Mary’s increasing memory loss but is reluctant to seek outside assistance because she believes she should be able to manage on her own.

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