

Admiral Nurse – Specialist Dementia Nurse

Working with people and families living with all types of dementia

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

What is dementia?

Dementia is an umbrella term for a progressive condition of the brain. Dementia describes a set of symptoms that may include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language. The most common types are Alzheimer's, Vascular, Lewy body, frontotemporal and mixed.

The brain is made up of nerve cells (neurones) that communicate with each other by sending messages. Dementia damages the nerve cells in the brain so messages can't be sent from and to the brain effectively, which prevents the body from functioning normally.

The specific symptoms that someone with dementia experiences will vary depending on the parts of the brain that are damaged and the disease that is causing the dementia.

Getting a diagnosis

Getting a diagnosis of dementia can be done at your GP or other health service support workers. The Admiral Nurse based at North Devon District Hospital (NDDH) is here to provide support to families and work as a connection between services. The Admiral Nurse does not diagnose cases of dementia.

Common misconceptions

- Dementia is not a natural part of aging.
- Alzheimer's is a type of dementia, not a different condition.
- People who have dementia are 'living with dementia' not 'suffering from dementia'.
- People living with dementia are often aware of what's happening around them. They have thoughts to communicate but struggle to relay these.

Admiral nurse role

- Support families and carers of a person living with dementia.
- Support the person living with dementia
- Support and education for staff

'This is me' document

"If today you can tell me everything about yourself but tomorrow you can't, what would you want me to know?"

Here at NDDH we use a document called 'This is me'. We want all people living with dementia who come in to our care to have their own 'This is me' document. This helps us personalise care to each individual and lets us know your likes and dislikes, life so far and how you take your cup of tea!

Dementia support cafe

At North Devon District Hospital we currently run two dementia support cafes a month. Tea and coffee is provided in an area where you can chat with our Admiral Nurse and volunteers.

First Wednesday of the month 2pm - 4pm

Third Wednesday of the month 4pm - 6pm

Raleigh Galley Restaurant, Level 0, North Devon District Hospital

If you are not able to come to NDDH, there may be other support cafes in your local area which we can give you information on.

Top tips

- Imagine your brain is a bookcase. Your earliest memories are at the bottom. Your most recent memories are at the top. All of the facts you know, the memories you have, the skills you've acquired. They're all individual books on a shelf in chronological order.

Now imagine dementia is like a storm, a force that comes along, hits the shelf, and rocks it back and forth.

When the bookshelf rocks, the top moves more than the bottom, so the newest memories fall off first, while childhood/earliest memories on the bottom of the bookcase most often remain.

- Don't make assumptions about a person's ability to communicate. Dementia affects each person differently.

- Don't exclude a person with dementia from the conversation.

Never

Reason
Shame
Lecture
Say 'Remember'
Say 'I told you so'
Say 'You can't'
Command or demand
Condescend
Force

Instead

Divert
Distract
Reassure
Reminiscence
Repeat and regroup
Find out what they can do
Ask and model
Encourage and praise
Reinforce

Contact details

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PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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