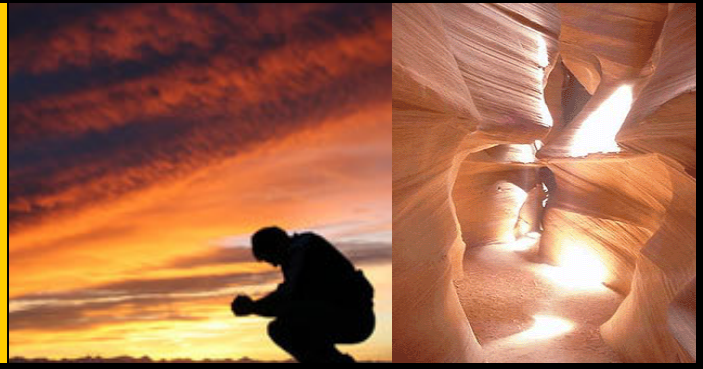


Myth Busting The Delirium Issue

Fourth in a series of 4 posters



What is Delirium?

- Delirium is not Dementia.
- Delirium is a sudden onset of mental confusion causing changes in behaviour.
- Older people, and especially those with dementia, are at greater risk.
- Recognizing and reporting the symptoms early can save lives.
- Delirium is a medical emergency.

Myth 4: You can't prevent delirium

Research confirms that there are several prevention strategies that can reduce the severity, duration and frequency of delirium and its functional/ cognitive impact.

Delirium prevention strategies:

- Know the causes of delirium
- Detect symptoms early
- Observations by frontline staff are critical: notice and report changes in resident behaviour and cognition
- Treat all potentially reversible causes (e.g., UTI, constipation)
- Use basic care prevention strategies: encourage fluids, sleep promotion, reduce noise, control pain, wearing of hearing aids/ glasses, verbal reminders & orientation, safety, keep daily routines, regular toileting, family visits, meaningful activities, hold something comforting, free movement, calm music; monitor for infection, review medication, decrease psychoactive meds, assess cognition (MMSE or MDS-RAI:CPS)

What can cause delirium?

- An infection (urinary, pneumonia, catheters, fever)
- Medication side effects
- Not taking medications as prescribed
- Recent surgery with anesthetic
- Worsening of a chronic illness
- Dehydration
- Malnutrition
- High or low blood sugar
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Pain
- Alcohol intoxication or withdrawal
- A recent injury (e.g., a fall)
- Recent move or hospitalization
- Grief and stress over a recent loss



Confusion Assessment Method (CAM)

Screening tool developed to provide a quick, accurate method for detection of delirium. CAM assesses 4 criteria for the presence and severity of delirium:

1. Acute onset & fluctuating course
2. Inattention
3. Disorganized thinking
4. Altered level of consciousness

The diagnosis of delirium requires the presence of criteria: (1) (2) **and** (3) **or** (4).

Adapted from BP Blogger vol. 3, issue 3, 2008. M.L. van der Horst (ed.) www.rpgc.ca

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