

LABS + DIAGNOSTICS

- No labs diagnose Alzheimers
- Definitive diagnosis: Brain tissue post-mortem
- CT & MRI can rule out treatable causes of dementia or delirium.
- Cranitic testing:
 - Amblyopia APOE4
 - Seep ↓ = supports diagnosis because amyloid tends to deposit in brain and isn't circulating in CSF.

PATHO:

Chronic, terminal disease characterized by formation of neuritic plaques, neurofibrillary tangles, vascular degeneration of brain.

Steady, gradual decline

RISK FACTORS

- ↑ w/ y10
- Chemical imbalances
- Family hx
- Down syndrome
- Traumatic brain injury
- Female
- Environmental agents (herpes virus, metal, toxic waste)
- African American
- Hispanic

SIGNS + SYSTEMS

Stage 1 (mild)

- Forget names, short term memory loss, difficulty recalling new info.
- Personality changes
- Mild, impaired cognition

Stage 2 (moderate)

- has impairment of all cognitive functions
- disoriented to time, place, event
- depressed / agitated
- delusions, hallucinations, paranoia.
- increasingly dependent ADLs

Stage 3 (late)

- incapacitated (bed ridden)
- Totally dependent on ADLs
- loss of mobility; verbal skills
- Seizures or tremors
- Agonistic (loss of sensory comprehension)



COMPLICATIONS

Falls due to wandering or confusion.

Complications related to immobility.

NURSING INTERVENTIONS

- Structured & consistent environment
- low noise levels
- create an environment that promotes adequate sleep.
- Assess cognitive status, memory, judgement, & personality changes.
- Encourage support groups
- Provide safe environment
- frequent walks
- check skin regularly
- cognitive stimulation
- memory training
- Avoid overstimulation
- routine toileting schedule
- Promote self-care
- Reduce agitation
- Speak directly to client in short, concise sentences.

MEDICATIONS

NMDA: N-methyl-d-aspartate receptor antagonist.

Antidepressants for depressed / anxious (SSRIs)

No medications:

- Donepezil - prevents breakdown of acetylcholine and ↑ amount available, ↑ nerve impulses
- Memantine - blocks nerve cell damage caused by excess glutamate. can be given w/ donepezil
- Cholinesterase: helps slow this process

Monitor: GI issues, frequent stools, dizziness, headache, unsteady gait

TREATMENTS

Therapies:

- Reminiscence therapy
- Validation therapy
- Redirection

Therapeutic

- Estrogen therapy can help prevent AD
- Ginkgo biloba ↑ memory & circulation
- Massages before bed
- Essential oils (lavender / bergamot)