

Checklist for communicating a dementia diagnosis and dementia care planning

- This checklist operationalises the Clinical Practice Guidelines for Dementia in Australia and the ADNeT Memory Clinic Guidelines.
- If the team giving the diagnosis is unable to offer a follow-up appointment following diagnosis, referral should be made to the patient's GP to develop and/or implement the care plan.
- See www.forwardwithdementia.au

Preparation

- Note cultural, patient and family views around being told the diagnosis.
- Ensure next of kin is invited, with the patient's permission.
- Ensure you have the **Forward with Dementia** Patient Information Resource (take home information) pad so you can complete and give to patient.

Introduction

- Give your name and role.
- Explain purpose of appointment (e.g. to give test results and explore options).
- Ask patient if they understand reason for tests and what they are hoping to get out of today's appointment.
- Explain test results (e.g. scans, cognitive tests, history) which support the diagnosis.

Giving the diagnosis

- Give the diagnosis by describing symptoms, assessment results, calling it a neurodegenerative condition, and then 'dementia', titrating what you tell the patient based on their responses. Name the type of dementia if known.
- Address the patient directly. Talk to next of kin only when relevant.
- Pause to allow time for the diagnosis to sink in.
- Ask the patient their reaction (e.g. thoughts, feelings).
- Explain more about the dementia, tailoring based on patient's reactions, type of dementia and level of understanding.
- Ask if the patient and carer have any questions about diagnosis.
- Address prognosis.
- Give the **Forward with Dementia** Patient Information Resource (take home information).

Care planning & management

- Every person with dementia should have a care plan.
- Care planning ideally occurs during a follow up appointment, or refer to patient's GP to develop and implement a chronic disease management plan.
- Emphasise that people live full lives with dementia, and treatments and supports are available.
- Ensure you understand patient and carer's goals and concerns.
- Medications – donepezil (Aricept), galantamine (Reminyl, Galantyl), rivastigmine, (Exelon, Exelon Patch), memantine (Ebixa, APO-Memantine, Memanxa).
- The cholinesterase inhibitors are PBS listed for mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease and can only be prescribed for people with an MMSE of 10 or more with confirmation of diagnosis by a specialist and stating it is sole subsidised medication
- Memantine is PBS listed for patients who have a diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease made by a specialist physician with a score of 10-14 on MMSE
- See www.pbs.gov.au for specific guidelines
- Driving – discuss driving safety and driving assessments, your responsibility to report to local driving authority, as well as contingencies if the person stops driving.
- Lifestyle recommendations – discuss exercise, staying cognitively and socially active, limit alcohol, stop smoking, 'Mediterranean' diet.
- General health – management of medications, optimal control of blood pressure, cholesterol and blood glucose.
- Psychological support – psychology referral (e.g. through a Mental Health Plan via GP) or Dementia Australia Counselling Service call 1800 100 500.
- Support with cognition, communication and function – Refer to occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech pathology, psychology (e.g. through Chronic Disease Management Plan via GP).
- Education and information – provide the website forwardwithdementia.org/au, dementia.org.au and Dementia Australia helpline number 1800 100 500.
- Managing work or usual activities – discuss issues as relevant.
- Legal and financial planning – discuss will, enduring power of attorney, enduring guardianship, advance care directives.
- Carer support – refer to local carer support services or to Dementia Australia.

To finish

- Ask if patient or carer has questions.
- Complete any referrals.
- Explain timing of next appointment or who they need to make a follow-up appointment with (e.g. their GP). Tell them who to contact if they have questions.
- Give a written summary of diagnosis and care plan recommendations.