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What does Dementia mean to the ambulance service?

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Ambulance staff are in frequent contact with people with dementia. It is therefore highly important that staff are provided with information, advice and guidance about dementia, how it affects people, and how to ensure that safeguarding principles and the 'best interest' of the person with dementia is maintained at all times. It is hard to tell if someone has dementia. **Only one in three people are ever diagnosed.**

Confirming a diagnosis of dementia can be difficult, particularly when the condition is in its early stages.

Symptoms of dementia can be caused by other conditions but always 'consider Dementia'





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Communication can be difficult for a person with dementia

Here are some of the ways that we can help communicate with someone living with Dementia:

Don't

- Interrupt a person while they are trying to speak
- Contradict or argue with them
- Speak for the person, perhaps to another professional
- Re-interpret what you think the person has said in your own words
- Use technical, complicated language
- Talk out of earshot or lowering your voice. This can cause the person to become very suspicious of you and what you are doing. This can lead to distressed reactions such as
- agitation and aggression.
- Give negative non-verbal communication such as, sighing, turning away or frowning as this can all be barriers to communication and easily recognised by the person with dementia who still understands non-verbal.





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- Focus groups for people living with dementia and their carers
- Mandatory face to face training on Dementia for all control room staff and frontline staff
- Published a DVD “Dementia Matters”
- Dementia Friends Sessions
- Quality Improvement Project on Dementia completed by two members of LAS staff
- Included in Level 3 safeguarding training for all clinical staff





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Focus Group feedback

41 people participated

5 questions were asked:

- 1) When you think of the ambulance service, what does it mean to you?
- 2) When you contact the ambulance service in an emergency what do you expect to happen next?
- 3) If there is a delay before an ambulance can get to you, what is important to you about the way this is managed?
- 4) What would make you want to write a Thankyou letter?
- 5) What advice would you give London ambulance staff about helping people living with dementia?





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2) Reassurance, kindness, empathy

Friendly but not over friendly

Expect call taker to know about dementia and the stages

Include the carer in the conversation but not forget the patient

3) Call taker questions are difficult for someone with short term memory

When we have to wait for an ambulance and don't understand why?





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4) People talked about the best service as being kind, gentle and caring, reassuring and talk to me nicely

People are looking for a professional approach, cool, calm and collected, time is important, to feel secure.

5) Talk to them like they don't have dementia

Awareness, individuality, respect

To be calm listeners

Not to be disinterested

Human niceness and dignity

Be patient and listen to what is being said





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Dementia Care Matters DVD was commissioned by NHSE and the London Ambulance Service

It was produced by Dr David Sheard, CEO/Founder, Dementia Care Matters and Alan Taylor Head of Safeguarding and Prevent for the LAS

This is a training DVD looking at best practice for ambulance staff supporting people living with dementia. The DVD has four films and summarises how to be aware, understand and connect to people experiencing dementia. Alongside this the DVD highlights the importance of being vigilant in relation to care concerns and poor care cultures which require action on safeguarding.

The DVD is filmed with real ambulance staff, highlights key skills needed in achieving positive communication, through assessments and appropriate action to support and safeguard people living with dementia

Key learning messages

Creating a positive relationship is key in good dementia care

Accepting a person's reality is the way to connect with someone

Learning the language of dementia is about interpreting feelings first

Looking out for safeguarding concerns is about people's human rights





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Introduction to Coordinate my Care CMC

CMC is an electronic palliative care coordination system which coordinates patient information across care providers. It is multidisciplinary, updateable, reportable, auditable, patient accessible, increasingly interoperable and, most importantly, considers what to do when things deteriorate.

CMC care plans seek to share with Urgent care services 3 answers to 3 questions:

Where the patient wants to and should be cared for?

How much clinical / medical intervention is appropriate?

How to manage expected symptoms/problems?



Good practice

LAS Called to an elderly female who was in a confused state ?Dementia. The patient was not interacting with the LAS and the crew were unable to converse effectively with the patient. The patient was distressed and shouting for the LAS to leave her home and did not appear to have capacity.

After some time on scene, the Paramedic approached the patient with dignity and used a different tailored approach for getting through to the patient. Although the patient was confused and distressed, the paramedic used some good techniques in order to get the patient talking. The paramedic talked about objects within the room in order to get the patient talking and then once a rapport was established the paramedic was able to take a history and carry out some observations on the patient.

The situation was resolved well and ended in a good outcome for the patient.

Feedback from Dementia sessions

- “Better understanding of how we can try to communicate with dementia patients, great examples given”
- “There is no such thing as wandering....people with dementia are going somewhere there is a purpose!”
- “I put 1940’s music on for my patient which calmed her down and she came out to the ambulance with us without any distress.”
- “We had a sing song on the way to hospital, couldn’t believe how my patients face lit up, and neither could her daughter”
- “From what I learnt I have had a better relationship with my mum!”

ANY
QUESTIONS
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