Understanding Dementia

1 How common is dementia in Hong Kong?

Among those aged 60 or above:

the prevalence of dementia is

1 in 14

Source: Elderly Commission: Prevalence of Dementia in Hong Kong (2006)

It is projected that……

in year 2036, the total number of patients aged 60+

with dementia will reach

280,000.

Source: CADENZA: Challenges of Population Ageing on Disease Trend and Burden Part III: Dementia (2010)

2 Symptoms of dementia

Progressive deterioration of brain cells:

cognitive function

memory

language ability
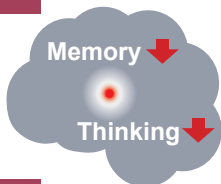
learning

comprehension

judgement

calculation ability

emotional and behavioural problems

There are three stages for dementia:

Early stage

e.g. forgetting where the personal items are stored

Memory

Thinking

Intermediate stage

easily get lost, mood changes, behavioral problems, decreased functional ability

Late stage

language impairment, cannot recognize relatives, incontinent ⟶ totally dependent

If anyone presents with the above symptoms, advise him / her to seek medical attention as soon as possible.

3 Keypoints for good communication with elderly people suffering from dementia

Draw their attention!

- Communicate in a quiet environment.
- Maintain eye contact.

Tips

- *Use hearing aids.*
- *Stand at the side which he / she has better hearing ability or eye sight.*

- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Do not shout or raise the voice.
- Keep sentences simple. Convey one message at a time.

- Allow time to respond.
- Repeat or prompt if necessary.

- Ask close-ended questions instead of asking 'What types of fruit would you like?'.
- Use real objects, pictures or words to aid communication.

- Avoid excessive body language.
- Give a pat on the shoulder or offer a drink for refreshment.
- Take a break before starting again.

We need to understand and always remind ourselves that what they said or did does not necessarily reflect their actual sense and feelings, nor did they do it deliberately to create trouble for you. In fact, they are just consequences of the disease.