

Delirium, Dementia, and other Cognitive Disorder

Delirium

Delirium is resulted when brain changes its way of working. The main cause is usually a disease process found elsewhere in the body outside the central nervous system.

Signs & Symptoms:- (Several of the following)

- Reduced clarity of awareness of environment, trouble in solving problem and reasoning
- Language – speech is disjointed, pressured, incoherent, or rambling
- Memory – have trouble remembering things, recent memory affected
- Perception – boundaries fuzzy, colour brighter, images distorted, visual hallucination, delusion
- Sleep-Wake Cycle – insomnia, day/night reversal, vivid dreams / nightmares
- Psychomotor Activity and Behaviour – slow down of physical movement or increased motor activity, react to their emotions by weeping / yelling / moaning / running away.

=> More common in children and elderly than in young and middle-aged adults.

Dementia

Means “loss” so it means deterioration compared to previous functioning level.

Signs & Symptoms:- (Several of the following)

- Memory Loss – amnesia. From recent memory to the more remote memories are affected. Also fail to recognize relatives or long time friend or own name
- Other Cognitive Deficits –
 - Fail to recognize familiar objects
 - Fail to recognize words
 - Fail to perform certain motor activities
 - Loss of executive functioning such as dressing and combing hair
- Impairment – A person’s daily social life and work are affected due to loss of ability to think and remembering
- Loss of interest in work / leisure
- Change in long-standing personality traits
- Inability to analyze, understand, remember, and apply old knowledge to new situation

=> Usually found in older adults but can be diagnosed anytime after 3 or 4 year old.

Alzheimer

Most common cause of senility, dementia of Alzheimer’s type.

Signs & Symptoms:- (Several of the following)

- Change in Personality – Become obsessional, secretive, sexually active, emotional labile, apathetic
- Memory Loss – Forgetful (recent memory first), immediate and remote memory are relatively well preserved

- Loss of Executive Functioning – Imitation behaviour. Lacking spontaneity and perseverance, environmental dependence.
- Aphasia- Trouble finding words. No longer uses complex sentences. Reading and writing may deteriorate
- Perceptual Defects – Illusion / hallucination. Some paranoid ideas and suspiciousness
- Complete Loss of insight
- Judgment Impaired
- Complete muteness and unresponsiveness may ensue

=> Usually age 65 and above and increases steadily with advancing age.

Reference:-

Morrison, J. (2001). DSM-IV Made Easy: The Clinician's Guide to Diagnosis. New York: The Guilford Press

For more detailed description and criteria of each mental illness, pls refer to the book mentioned above or <http://www.psychologynet.com>