The Psychiatric Liaison Team for Older Adults

A guide to delirium, depression and dementia for patients and carers
The Liaison Team

We are a mental health team working at Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospitals. We offer mental health assessments and advice to older adults who need psychological support.

- We see people 65 years of age and over
- Patients must be inpatients at Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospitals
- The service is for people who are suffering from mental ill-health during their time in hospital
- We will help you by keeping you informed about your treatment options
- We can offer you written information about any medicines or treatments we recommend
- We can offer you written information about your illness
- We will encourage you to take an active role in planning for your discharge
- We will talk with the community services and your GP to make sure that you receive the best aftercare once discharged
- We will involve and support your carers and relatives where possible.
Inpatient Assessments

The Older Adults Liaison Team is available from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (except Public Holidays).

There are out-of-hours and emergency psychiatric services at Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospitals (after 5pm Monday to Friday and at weekends).

If you would like to speak to a member of the Psychiatric Liaison Team, please discuss this with the ward staff.

In some cases we will be asked to see people because the ward staff feel that they are psychologically unwell.

We see patients suffering from:
- depression
- memory problems
- dementia
- anxiety
- delirium
- schizophrenia
- alcohol dependence
- drug dependence
- behavioural disturbances

We are sometimes asked to help the hospital doctors in assessing a person's ability to make important decisions about their care, their medicines and their future.
Dementia is the term given to a number of illnesses which share some common symptoms.

- Alzheimer's Disease is the most common type of dementia.
- Sometime after the age of 65 about 1 in 20 people have dementia.
- About 1 in 5 people over the age of 80 have dementia.
- Rarely, it affects younger people.
- Dementia is progressive, which means the symptoms will gradually get worse.
- Dementia usually affects older people and becomes more common with increasing age.
- Having a dementia is NOT a normal part of getting older.
Dementia

Symptoms of dementia include:

• **Forgetfulness and loss of memory** - for example, getting lost in familiar situations and places, forgetting names of places and people, or forgetting appointments or what you did earlier in the day.

• **Mood and behaviour changes** - particularly as parts of the brain that control emotion are affected by disease. People with dementia may also feel unhappy, scared or angry about what is happening to them. People can lose track of the time of day, feel restless and begin wandering.

• **Communication problems** - losing the ability to talk, think of words, read and write.

There are a number of things that can be done to help a person living with dementia. This includes medication, psychological support, community support and adaptations in the home.

Problems from other illnesses can cause symptoms much like dementia. These include:

• Depression
• Thyroid, liver and kidney problems
Delirium

Delirium is a state of **mental confusion**, which is reversible.

It happens suddenly and you could suffer from symptoms from a few days up to a few weeks. The symptoms of delirium can change throughout the day and night.

Delirium can happen when you are medically unwell (eg. if you have a urine infection) or as a side effect of some medicines, after surgery or because you are withdrawing after using very large amounts of alcohol.

**Symptoms might include:**
- restlessness and being unable to settle
- feeling lost or disorientated
- feeling muddled or not being able to think clearly
- feeling anxious, scared or frightened
- seeing and hearing things that don't exist and that others cannot see or hear (hallucinations)
- worrying that people are trying to harm you
- changes in your sleep patterns and times
- vivid dreams that still seem real when you wake up.

Between 30-40% of older people in hospital develop a delirium before or during their inpatient stay.

**You are more at risk of developing a delirium if you are:**
- an older person
- experiencing memory problems (like dementia), or have poor eyesight or hearing
- recovering from recent surgery
- a person with an illness of the brain, such as a stroke, head injury or infection
- terminally ill.
Delirium

Treating delirium:
• The cause of the delirium needs to be treated (e.g. giving antibiotics for a urine or a chest infection)
• You might be given extra medicines, for a short time, to treat the undesirable symptoms of the delirium
• Even after the cause of the delirium has been treated you might still experience some of the distressing symptoms for a short time
• In most cases, the symptoms will disappear when the underlying cause has been treated.

Helping a relative with delirium in hospital:
• Stay calm
• Offer them reassurance and practical support
• People with delirium might say and do things which are out of character- don't take it personally
• Speak to them in short and simple sentences
• Remind them of where they are and of what is happening
• Don't agree (collude) with unusual or strange ideas- tactfully disagree or change the subject
• Bring familiar photos and items into hospital (but nothing expensive or breakable)
• Keep them in touch with the date and time of day
• Help them with eating, drinking and taking their medicines
• Bring in spectacles and hearing aids if they wear them.

Please speak to a member of the ward staff if you need support, information or further advice.
Depression

Everyone feels sad sometimes, but if this has gone on for more than a few weeks, or is so bad that others have noticed a change in you, you may be suffering from depression.

Other signs might include:

• Feeling tired, even after a night’s rest
• Losing your appetite, which may affect your weight
• Worrying more than is usual for you
• Feeling guilty about things in your past that perhaps never bothered you before
• Worrying about being a burden to others
• Difficulty concentrating
• Feeling irritable or becoming frustrated more quickly
• Losing your sexual feelings
• Thinking about suicide
Depression

Other signs of depression can be if your feelings:

• have continued for longer than expected or are getting worse
• are interfering with your life
• are noticed by other people such as family members or friends
• make you feel that life is not worth living

There are different treatments available, and these include talking therapies as well as antidepressant medication.
Carers - looking after yourself

Looking after a partner, relative or friend with mental illness can be very stressful and tiring.

It can also be very rewarding and fulfilling.

It is very important to look after your own health and have time away from the caring environment.

Don't be afraid to ask for help if you feel that you are struggling.

There are many agencies who can offer free advice and practical support (see page 11) on matters such as:

- financial and benefits reviews
- 'sitting' services, allowing you to leave to home for a few hours whilst a trained volunteer stays with your relative
- transport
- day centres and clubs
- medicines and treatments
- carer support groups and psychotherapy
- respite care
- some local councils have funds for carers and the people they care for to take holidays

Talk to your family, GP, social worker, community nurse or telephone a support line (such as Carers UK).

You are entitled to a Carer's Assessment via a social worker which will look specifically at your concerns and needs. Approach your GP if you or your ill relative don't have a social worker.
Contacts and useful information

• The Alzheimer's Society UK
  Website: www.alzheimers.org.uk
  Telephone: 020 7423 3500

• Age Concern
  Website: www.ageconcern.org.uk
  Telephone: 0800 00 99 66

• Carers UK
  Website: www.carersuk.org
  Telephone: 0808 808 7777 (for caring advice).

• Help the Aged
  Website: www.helptheaged.org.uk
  Telephone: 020 7278 1114

• Care Quality Commission
  Website: www.cqc.org.uk

• Guy's and St. Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
  Website: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk
  Telephone: 020 7188 7188

• The Royal College of Psychiatrists
  Website: www.rcpsych.ac.uk

• The Princess Royal Trust for Carers
  Website: www.carers.org
  Telephone: 0844 800 4361

• South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust
  Website: www.slam.nhs.uk
  Telephone: 020 3228 6000
Options available

If you’d like a large print, audio, Braille or a translated version of this leaflet then please ask us.

Complaints

If you are not happy about something but not sure you want to make a formal complaint you can speak to a member of staff directly. Alternatively you can contact the PALS Office on freephone 0800 731 2864. If you decide you want to make a formal complaint this can be done by contacting the Complaints Department:

Complaints Department, Maudsley Hospital,
Denmark Hill, London SE5 8AZ

T: (020) 3228 2444/2499
E: complaints@slam.nhs.uk
W: www.slam.nhs.uk

Useful contact details

SLaM Switchboard: 020 3228 6000
SLaM 24hr Information Line - Advice on how to access SLaM Services: 0800 731 2864

Contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) for help, advice and information:

T: 0800 731 2864
W: www.pals.slam.nhs.uk
E: pals@slam.nhs.uk

www.tfl.gov.uk/journeyplanner

For the quickest way to plan your journey anywhere in greater London use journey planner:

020 7222 1234 (24hrs)