

Hartman's  
In-Service Education SourceBook Series



# Caring for the Person with Alzheimer's or other Dementias

Paula Siciliano, MSN, GNC



## Caring for the Person with

# ALZHEIMER'S

or other Dementias

### Contributor:

**Paula Siciliano, MSN, GNC**  
Director of Education  
Clinical Specialist  
Applegate Home Health  
Salt Lake City, Utah

The publisher gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following individuals who reviewed this material:

**Charles A. Illian, RN, BSN, CIC**  
Staff Development Educator  
Consultant  
Orlando, Florida

**Kristine Beilby, PHN, MPH**  
Presbyterian Home Care  
Roseville, Minnesota

**Paula S. Elberhousi, RN, BSN, MS**  
Educator & Creative Consultant  
The Creative Pen  
New York, New York

**Robert Grabowski, MA, RN, C**  
Assistant Director of Staff Development  
M.J.G. Nursing Home Co., Inc.  
Brenner Pavilion  
Brooklyn, New York

**Ruth M. Hardke-Peck, LPN**  
Staff Development Coordinator  
Pine Valley Care Center  
Richfield, Ohio

**Debra A. Hillenbrand, RN, C**

**Ciarán O'Sullivan, RN, MS**  
Director of Nursing, Lake Forest Place  
Lake Forest, Illinois  
and Adjunct Faculty, Nursing Division  
Oakton Community College  
Des Plaines, Illinois

**Dorothy A. Pennington, RN, BSN**  
Director of Staff Development  
Life Care Center of North Glendale  
Glendale, Arizona

**Gloria N. Ristvedt, RN, BSN, BS EI Ed**  
Director of Staff Development  
Jenkins Living Center  
Watertown, South Dakota

**Deborah Snyder, RN**

**Barbara J. Yinger, RN, BSN**  
Retired Inservice Coordinator &  
Home Health Aide Trainer  
Home Call, Inc.  
Former Volunteer Instructor  
Frederick County Alzheimer's Association  
Frederick, Maryland



Albuquerque, NM

## NOTICE TO THE READER

Though the guidelines contained in this text are based on consultations with healthcare professionals, they should not be considered absolute recommendations. The instructor and readers should follow employer, local, state, and federal guidelines concerning healthcare practices. These guidelines change, and it is the reader's responsibility to be aware of these changes and of the policies and procedures of her or his healthcare facility/agency.

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## CREDITS

Contributor: Paula Siciliano  
Development Editors: Celia McIntire and Jennifer Plane Hartman  
Copy Editor: Susan Alvare  
Design: John W. Davis  
Composition: Celia McIntire  
Illustration: Thaddeus Castillo

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# Table of Contents

<b>FYI</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5: Identify personal attitudes helpful in caring for people with Alzheimer's or any dementia</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>PART I</b>			
<b>Introduction and Assessment</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>Transparency:</b> Helpful Attitudes (42)	
<b>Handouts:</b>		<b>Handouts:</b> Helpful Attitudes (43) Note Cards for Role Play (44)	
Assessment A (8)			
Assessment A Answer Key (9)			
Assessment B (10)			
Assessment B Answer Key (12)			
Note-Taking Worksheet (13)			
Key Terms (15)			
<b>1: Define dementia, and list related terms</b>		<b>6: List five strategies for better communication with people who have Alzheimer's or any dementia</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Transparencies:</b>		<b>Transparency:</b> Communication Challenges and Strategies (47)	
What is Dementia? (18)		<b>Handouts:</b> Communication Tips (48) Communication Tips: Small Group Discussion (50)	
Dementia and Related Terms (19)			
<b>2: Describe Alzheimer's disease, and list other causes of dementia</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>PART II</b>	
<b>Transparencies:</b>		<b>7: Describe a safe and well-organized environment for a person with Alzheimer's or any dementia</b>	<b>51</b>
What Causes Dementia? (21)		<b>Handouts:</b> Good Idea/Bad Idea Game Cards (52) Good Idea/Bad Idea Answer Key (56)	
Causes of Dementia: Distribution (22)			
<b>Handouts:</b>		<b>8: Describe five guidelines for assisting the person with Alzheimer's with personal care and activities of daily living</b>	<b>57</b>
Causes of Dementia (23)		<b>Transparency:</b> Personal Care and ADLs (58)	
Word Search - Causes of Dementia (25)		<b>Handouts:</b> Personal Care and ADLs (59) Sample Care Plan (61)	
Word Search Answer Key (26)			
<b>3: List five facts about Alzheimer's disease</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9: List five difficult behaviors commonly exhibited by people with Alzheimer's and describe ways to manage each</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Transparencies:</b>		<b>Transparency:</b> Managing Difficult Behaviors (64)	
Alzheimer's Disease Statistics (30)		<b>Handout:</b> Managing Difficult Behaviors (65)	
More Alzheimer's Statistics (31)			
Alzheimer's Disease Facts (32)			
PET Scans (33)			
<b>Handouts:</b>			
Ten Warning Signs of Alzheimer's (34)			
Overview of Alzheimer's Statistics (35)			
<b>4: Describe the progression Alzheimer's disease may follow</b>	<b>35</b>		
<b>Transparency:</b>			
Mental Status Questionnaire (38)			
<b>Handout:</b>			
Progression of Alzheimer's Disease (39)			

**10: List five ways to promote the dignity and independence of the person with Alzheimer's** **67**

**Transparency:**

Creative Therapies (69)

**Handout:**

Promoting Dignity and Independence (70)

**11: List three ways to maintain the morale of family members of people with Alzheimer's** **71**

**Transparencies:**

Working with Families and Friends (73)

Communicating with the Family (74)

**Handouts:**

Common Symptoms of AD and the Impact on the Family (75)

Communicating with the Family (76)

**Closing and Assessment** **78**

**Handouts:**

Assessment A (8)

Assessment A Answer Key (9)

Assessment B (10)

Assessment B Answer Key (12)

**References** **79**

**In-Service Evaluation Form** **81**

**For More Information** **82**

**Certificate of Completion** **83**

**Record Keeping Form** **84**

**Order Cards** **85**

**F**our million Americans currently suffer from Alzheimer's disease and an estimated six to nine million will have the disease by 2040 if a cure is not found. Because half of nursing home residents are living with Alzheimer's, and an even greater number of people with Alzheimer's are living at home, it is essential that all healthcare workers, whether nursing assistants, home health aides, or others, be trained and supported in providing the best possible care for people living with Alzheimer's disease.

We have designed this in-service to help you ensure that your clients or residents with Alzheimer's or other dementias receive the best possible care. We hope these materials will help make your job easier and more rewarding.

This in-service is organized by learning objectives. Each objective follows a lesson plan, which is built around learning activities and teaching tools, such as transparency masters, handouts, and assessments. You may decide to use none or all of these tools in your presentation.

Because the in-service covers a lot of material, you may wish to divide your presentation into two parts:

1. Learning Objectives 1-6
2. Learning Objectives 7-11

We have indicated on the assessments where to break if you are teaching this in-service in two sessions.

Some additional resources on Alzheimer's can be ordered from various agencies and organizations. We include order forms at the back of this SourceBook to request these materials. Be sure to send the order forms promptly as it can take time to receive the materials.

Please note that limited permission is granted to photocopy the handouts for use at the site originally purchasing this in-service. Photocopying other parts of this in-service, including the lesson plan, is expressly prohibited.

To use handouts, photocopy the number needed for your group. Consider using different colors of paper to organize the different handouts or to make some stand out.

Convert transparency masters to acetates for use with an overhead projector. You can do this by purchasing transparency film at an office supply store and photocopying the transparency masters onto the acetates, or you can have a copy company do it for you. If overhead projection is not convenient for your presentation area, you may wish to copy the information from the transparency masters onto a chalkboard, flip chart, or dry erase board.

**Happy Teaching!**



# Introduction and Assessment

**Estimated Time:** 5-15 minutes

**Tools:** Handout Intro-1 Assessment A  
Handout Intro-2 Assessment A Answer Key  
or  
Handout Intro-3 Assessment B  
Handout Intro-4 Assessment B Answer Key  
  
Handout Intro-5 Note-Taking Worksheet  
Handout Intro-6 Key Terms

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**Learning Activity:** **Lecture**

The learning objectives in this in-service are designed to cover:

- Understanding dementias (including Alzheimer's) and their causes
- Developing skills to work with people who have dementia

**Learning Activity:** **Assessment**

**Distribute  
Handout Intro-1  
Assessment A  
or  
Handout Intro-3  
Assessment B**

Two different assessments are provided for your use: one has true/false questions and one has multiple choice. You may choose to use either one as a pre-test and post-test, or you may want to use the true/false assessment as a discussion tool to introduce the in-service and use the multiple choice assessment as a more formal post-test. If you are using one assessment as a discussion tool in your introduction, consider having the participants complete the assessment in small groups, then ask each group how they think they did. Ask which questions they feel certain they answered correctly. This will make a good lead-in to the learning objectives.

**Learning Activity:** **Discussion**

**Distribute  
Handout Intro-5  
Note-Taking  
Worksheet**

Tell participants to take notes during all lectures and discussions to help them organize and remember the information presented.

**Distribute  
Handout Intro-6  
Key Terms**

Depending on your preference this handout can be used to preview or to review the terms used in the in-service. Cross off or skip over any terms your group does not need to know.



# Assessment A

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**True or False.** For each of the following statements, write “T” for true or “F” for false.

## Part I

1. \_\_\_ A person with dementia was born without the mental abilities necessary to care for him- or herself.
2. \_\_\_ An irreversible disease, like Alzheimer’s, can be cured with proper treatment.
3. \_\_\_ Alzheimer’s is the most common cause of dementia in the elderly.
4. \_\_\_ All forms of dementia are irreversible.
5. \_\_\_ A person with Alzheimer’s can live from three to twenty years after symptoms appear.
6. \_\_\_ Half of all nursing home residents have Alzheimer’s or a related disorder.
7. \_\_\_ No cure exists for Alzheimer’s disease.
8. \_\_\_ The stages of progression of Alzheimer’s are the same in all patients.
9. \_\_\_ In the “late dementia” stage of Alzheimer’s, people have no verbal abilities and need help with all activities of daily living.
10. \_\_\_ People with Alzheimer’s can purposely be rude and angry with their caregivers.
11. \_\_\_ Taking good care of yourself is an important part of caring for dementia victims, since the job can be so draining.
12. \_\_\_ When communicating with someone who has Alzheimer’s, you may need to repeat yourself or use drawings to get your point across.
13. \_\_\_ If a person with dementia wants to talk about the past all the time, you should redirect conversation to current events.

## Part II

14. \_\_\_ As soon as people are diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, they must be confined to their rooms at all times and their activity must be restricted.
15. \_\_\_ People with dementia should always wear identification in case they wander away.
16. \_\_\_ Marking stairs with brightly colored tape can help prevent falls.
17. \_\_\_ When caring for a person with dementia, you should respect their privacy by not asking about bowel movements and toileting needs.
18. \_\_\_ The amount of personal care a person with Alzheimer’s needs is likely to increase as the disease progresses.
19. \_\_\_ Sundowning means that people with Alzheimer’s tend to become more alert and cooperative towards the end of the day.
20. \_\_\_ Depression is common among people with dementia.
21. \_\_\_ Exercise can help reduce restlessness and have other benefits for the person with dementia.
22. \_\_\_ Excellent care for a person with Alzheimer’s involves promoting the person’s dignity and independence for as long as possible.
23. \_\_\_ Marking rooms with signs or pictures is a bad idea because it can confuse a dementia victim.
24. \_\_\_ Everyone can benefit if family and friends are involved in Alzheimer’s care.
25. \_\_\_ Respite care services are a good way for families of people in home care to get a break.

# Assessment A Answer Key

## Part I

- 1. False.** Dementia is not inborn. It can be caused by an irreversible disease (like Alzheimer's) or a potentially reversible condition (like drug intoxication or a tumor) that occurs during a person's lifetime. (Objectives 1 and 2)
- 2. False.** An irreversible disease cannot be cured. (Objective 1)
- 3. True.** (Objective 2)
- 4. False.** Dementia caused by certain conditions, like alcoholism or malnutrition, can be reversible if the cause is found and treated. (Objective 2)
- 5. True.** (Objective 2)
- 6. True.** (Objective 3)
- 7. True.** (Objective 3)
- 8. False.** Although there are general stages used to categorize people with Alzheimer's, each person with the disease may show different symptoms at different times. (Objective 4)
- 9. True.** (Objective 4)
- 10. False.** People with Alzheimer's often have no control over what they say or do. Caregivers should never take words and actions personally. (Objective 5)
- 11. True.** (Objective 5)
- 12. True.** (Objective 6)
- 13. False.** Talking about the past or reminiscing can be beneficial for people with Alzheimer's and it can help you learn more about how to provide the best care. (Objective 6)

## Part II

- 14. False.** People with Alzheimer's will need different levels of care at different stages of the disease. Many activities can be very therapeutic for people with Alzheimer's and should be encouraged, not restricted. (Objective 7)
- 15. True.** (Objective 7)
- 16. True.** (Objective 7)
- 17. False.** Maintaining and documenting a toileting routine is essential to protect the physical health of a person with dementia. (Objective 8)
- 18. True.** (Objective 8)
- 19. False.** Sundowning means that people with Alzheimer's can become more agitated and restless towards the end of the day. (Objective 9)
- 20. True.** (Objective 9)
- 21. True.** (Objective 9)
- 22. True.** (Objective 10)
- 23. False.** Marking rooms with signs or pictures can help a dementia victim remain oriented. (Objective 10)
- 24. True.** (Objective 11)
- 25. True.** (Objective 11)

# Assessment B

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Multiple Choice.** Choose the correct answer.

## Part I

1. A loss of mental abilities that interferes with activities of daily living is called:
  - a. activity therapy
  - b. sundowning
  - c. dementia
  - d. respite care
2. Alzheimer's disease is:
  - a. a reversible condition that can be cured
  - b. an irreversible condition that cannot be cured
  - c. a result of hardening of the arteries
  - d. a result of drug abuse
3. Alzheimer's is the \_\_\_\_\_ leading cause of death among adults.
  - a. first
  - b. second
  - c. fourth
  - d. tenth
4. Of all the people with Alzheimer's:
  - a. most live at home
  - b. most live in nursing facilities
  - c. most are hospitalized
  - d. most are homeless
5. All the following statements about Alzheimer's are true EXCEPT:
  - a. No cure exists for Alzheimer's.
  - b. Gradual memory loss is often an early symptom.
  - c. The only definitive diagnosis is by autopsy.
  - d. Alzheimer's is caused by high blood pressure.
6. In the "late dementia" stage of Alzheimer's, a person will not be able to:
  - a. speak
  - b. control bladder or bowels
  - c. eat without assistance
  - d. do any of the above
7. In order to determine how much mental ability has been lost, we may use:
  - a. reminiscence therapy
  - b. a mental status questionnaire
  - c. blood tests
  - d. MRI
8. All of the following are helpful attitudes when working with people with Alzheimer's EXCEPT:
  - a. Treat all people with Alzheimer's the same way, to be fair.
  - b. Work with family members.
  - c. Work with the symptoms and behaviors you see.
  - d. Do not take words or actions personally.
9. The goals of care for a person with dementia should be:
  - a. to provide security and comfort
  - b. to promote dignity and self-esteem
  - c. to encourage independence
  - d. all of the above
10. When people with Alzheimer's are frightened or agitated, you should:
  - a. physically restrain them
  - b. call their doctor immediately; it could mean they are very sick
  - c. move and speak slowly and calmly
  - d. quickly and loudly instruct them to calm down
11. Good strategies for communicating with people with Alzheimer's include:
  - a. repeating yourself when necessary, using the same words
  - b. using non-verbal communication, like gestures and pictures
  - c. both a and b
  - d. none of the above