



In Care of You

A newsletter for Caregivers from Greene County Council on Aging

September 2022

Hospital Delirium

According to Dr Leslie Kernisan, Delirium (altered mental state) is a significant concern for older adults. Delirium can and does affect up to half of aging adults during hospitalization. Risk factors include having pre-existing dementia and undergoing surgery. Having had delirium in the past is also a strong risk factor. The following information is a summary of Dr Kernisan's web article drkernisan.net/author/lkernisan/.

Delirium is strongly associated with worse health outcomes and contributes to falls, longer hospital stays, accelerating cognitive decline, and a higher chance of dying within the following year. There often isn't a single cause for delirium. Instead, it tends to happen due to a combination of triggers (illness, pain, medication side-effects) and risk factors (dementia, or pre-dementia). This means that treatment and prevention often require a multi-pronged approach. Experts estimate that about 40% of delirium cases are preventable.

It is wise to seek hospitals with a multi-disciplinary delirium prevention approach or a geriatric co-management program. Family caregivers can help by asking for limited interruptions during the night to minimize sleep disturbances. Sleeping pills are not recommended. Mild sedative, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) increases the risk of developing



delirium. Sleeping pills can also make delirium worse in someone who is already affected. Try non-drug relaxation therapies such as soothing music, massage, a cup of tea. Make sure the older person has their glasses and hearing aids available.

Family or friends at the bedside are helpful, especially since they can help gently reorient an older person to the situation and minimize mental strain or emotional stress for the person. Family can help by making staff aware of changes in cognition. Although many older people are sick or weak while in the hospital, it's important to encourage safe activity as soon as possible.

Ask the older person if he or she feels bothered by pain or constipation. If so, alert the medical staff. It's not uncommon for pain to go inadequately treated unless family caregivers help an older patient bring it to the doctors' attention.

If family caregivers think their loved one has developed delirium, make sure the doctors and

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In Care of You

Providing support for those who support others

Hospital Delerium, continued

nurses know about it. Caregivers may want to ask what the plan is for evaluating and managing delirium in the case of difficult behaviors or risk of injury. This can be very challenging in those patients who become restless when delirious. Many hospitals use physical restraints which can lead to more agitation and possibly injury, but it can also prevent someone from falling and causing more serious injury to their personhood – it’s a fine line. As a last resort, doctors sometimes use low doses of antipsychotic medication.

It can take a while for delirium to improve. In fact, it’s pretty common for it to take weeks or even months to completely resolve in an older adult. In some cases, the person never recovers back to their prior normal.

GCCOA Resources for You

Support Groups

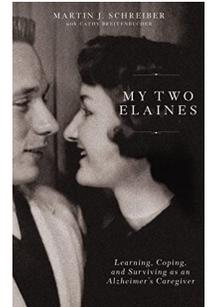
- 1st Tuesday of month at 11:30 pm
GCCOA Xenia office
- 2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 9:30 am, Peace Lutheran Church, 3530 Dayton-Xenia Rd, Beavercreek
- Online support group returns in September. It is on the 3rd Tuesday of the month, from 2:30 — 4pm. Contact us for information.

Weekly Radio Segment

Partners in Caregiving every Thursday soon after 6pm
WBZI—FM 100.3 AM 1500

Recommended Reading & Listening

A few months ago, we recommended the book *My Two Elaines* by Martin J Schreiber. Mr Schreiber, the former governor of Wisconsin, was his wife’s caregiver for 18 years after her diagnosis of Alzheimer’s Disease.



Here is a link to an excellent one-hour podcast featuring Mr Schreiber :“3 Things Every Alzheimer’s Caregiver Needs to Know With Martin Schreiber.”

<https://tinyurl.com/2p825xub>

Note that you can listen from the web page; you don’t need to have the Apple podcast app.

“Nearly 40 percent of America’s 15.9 million Alzheimer’s caregivers are men, up from 19 percent 15 years earlier. For an increasing number of couples, Alzheimer’s has upended traditional spousal roles that were decades in the making.”
from mytwoelaines.com/



We hope you enjoy this publication, and welcome your comments and ideas for future issues. Let us know if you no longer wish to receive this newsletter.