

How to help Victims of Dementia

Dementia refers to the deterioration of the brain function which leads to declines in memory and cognitive functions. Its symptoms include loss of memory, problems in speech and understanding as well as change in personalities and behaviors. Its prevalence rate increases with age. Studies showed that 5-10% of people aged over 65 had dementia. Yet, the cause remains unknown, but depressed mood (pseudodementia), thyroid gland disorder, malnutrition or alcoholism are possible causes.

The two main types of dementia are Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia. Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most common one, but its cause remains unknown. Patients with AD will gradually lose their memory and cognitive functions. Vascular dementia is caused by a single or repeated strokes or a gradual loss of blood supply in brain, leading to declines in cognitive functions.

Early stage of dementia is characterized by mild cognitive impairment and behavioral changes. If these patients do not receive any treatment, they will develop difficulties in managing their daily life and become independent on other people, such as dressing, washing and bathing. With progression of the dementia, they will become unable to communicate with other people.

As everyday care is required for these patients, family members may feel stressful and face physical, mental and economic problems. Hence, referrals to community care service, support from relatives and neighbors and sharing sessions with similar families are recommended. A regular schedule may also help to maintain their life. To prevent getting lost, contact information of family members should be kept by these patients, like engraving telephone number on wrist bracelets.

If early diagnosis of dementia is found in elderly, medical advice should be sought from appropriate clinics.