The Days of Their Lives: How Life Experiences Shape our Patients

Sandra Hobson, BSc(OT), MAED, LLD, OT Reg. (Ont.)
shobson@uwo.ca

Acknowledgements:
• Student Biographers:
  • Carly Edwardson
  • Kara Park
  • Reza Toghrol
• Student Researchers:
  • Vicki Choy
  • Kristy Ferguson
  • Preety Jagpal
  • Christianne Mace

Objectives:
• Identify the historical context and common life experiences of our oldest patients
• Discuss how such experiences might impact behaviour in those with dementia
• Learn strategies for managing PTSD in older patients with dementia
• Discuss case examples

Cast Your Mind Back …

The Days of Their Lives

• When you were 14 …
  • What was the longest you were away from your parents and family?
• When you were 16 …
  • What was your biggest concern?
• What is the worst thing you ever did in your life?
• What is the worst thing you ever saw?

Now and Then …
a world of difference
Laura
• Born 1924 in Poland
• When she was 14, “Laura recalls a certain day…
• Laura lives in London now. You might pass her on the street, she may live next door to you, she may be a patient…

George
• Born 1925 in Holland
• “When George was 15, Holland went to war…
• George lives in southwestern Ontario now. He may be a friend, an acquaintance, a patient…

Ji Sun
• Born 1923 in Japanese occupied Korea
• At age 20, Ji Sun was conscripted “by the Japanese government…
• Ji Sun lives in Toronto now, where she owned and operated a video rental/convenience store, working from 7am until 11 pm daily. You might have been her customer; she might be your patient…

George
• We’ve met George before – the young boy in Holland.
• He did heroic things …
• He saw horrific things…

PTSD & Dementia

PTSD
• 1/11 Canadians; 1/3 in combat veterans
• Follows exposure to extreme stress/trauma
• Symptoms include persistent re-experiencing, avoidance of stimuli, general numbing of emotions, and increased arousal
• Co-morbidities
• Impairs social and occupational functioning
Dementia

- 1/3 Canadians over age 85, rising fast
- Most common types are Alzheimer Disease and Vascular Dementia or a combination
- Symptoms include deficits in communication, problem solving, spatial perception, judgement, etc.
- Progressively impairs function in all aspects of life, even basic self care

PTSD & Dementia

- Scoping Review –
  - English articles from 8 databases
  - Search terms related to PTSD and dementia
  - Government of Canada and Canadian veteran’s websites
  - 27 articles included

PTSD & Dementia

- Dementia may cause PTSD or allow its symptoms to (re-)emerge
- PTSD may be a risk factor for dementia
- There is a relationship, but directionality cannot be inferred
- More research is needed
- More awareness and education are needed

PTSD & Dementia

- Implication of not recognizing PTSD in those with dementia?
  - Inappropriate reactions
    - Placement
    - Restraint
    - Sedation
    - Negative responses by staff
  - Lack of appropriate treatment

Recommendations
General Principles

- Consider/assess potential trauma history\textsuperscript{6-8,16}
- Maximize autonomy\textsuperscript{16}
  - Decision-making opportunities
  - Personal clothing, possessions
  - Privacy
  - Reduced physical handling
  - Effective communication
- Minimize potential triggers\textsuperscript{16}

Potential Triggers\textsuperscript{16}

- Showers
- Hospital ID band
- Hospital gowns
- Certain symptoms in self/others
- Medical & surgical procedures
- Some staff accents/names
- And many more

Re-Interpret Behaviours

- Hoarding/stealing food and belongings
- Adverse responses to certain patients
- Wanting night lights
- Panic during fire alarms

Case Scenarios

Miss Mary Hawkins

- No known family, no visitors
- Advanced dementia
- Disruptive at night – moaning, yelling “Help me” and “No!”
- Disturbing other patients
- Tells staff there are men hiding in her room

Mr. Ira Jankovic

- Scholarly widower, no children
- Post CVA, but cognitively clear
- Early one morning, he punched a male nurse who came in to get him up, yelling “No, no!”
- Remorseful and crying later in the morning, begging forgiveness
References