



Editor's remarks: This is the eleventh edition of our PRC-PC Newsletter, providing quick tips and useful information to fit your fast-paced work environment and to help you in the care of patients with dementia. This issue focuses on wandering. Six in 10 people with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia become lost at least once (TheStar.com, March 2, 2015). This is often referred to in the literature as wandering and is considered one of the highest risk behaviours associated with dementia. In this issue we will explore reasons for wandering and what we can do to keep patients safe and yet help maintain their quality of life (Einat Danieli – OT.Rea. Ont: PRC-PC).

TIP OF THE MONTH

In order to address wandering effectively it is important to first understand the reason for wandering. Is the person simply triggered by the sight of the door? Is it confusion/disorientation due to medication? Is the person responding to something unpleasant in the environment? Is he/she looking for something or someone from their past? You can also ask the caregiver to keep a log/journal to better understand the triggers. Knowing the reason will help us to plan a more targeted and personalized intervention. Read more [here](#)

General communication tips to use/share with family members:

In example a patient with dementia tries to leave your office and search for his/her children thinking they are still young" you can start by

1. Validating the person's emotion or sense of worry "I can see you are worried about your children, you must love them a lot" you can also say "tell me about your children";
2. Continue to reassure and offer to help "It's going to be ok; we can figure this out together/I'm here to help";
3. then try distract to another activity "Let's go in for a second while I get my stuff and we can figure it out" or "It's a bit early why don't we have a nice cup of coffee before we go".

Prevention: Depending on the reason for wandering consider the following

- Offer for the caregiver to arrange a friendly visitor through [CNAP](#) or a friend to accompany the person to where they want to go.
- Use **Alzheimer's Society Safely Home program** -[link](#)
- Use of GPS tracking devices and smart alarms -[link1](#); [link2](#); [link3](#).
- Use of coded locks, handle locks, knobs safety covers, etc. or use a barrier to conceal the door/door knob to prevent the person from finding the door – **This should only be used when there is someone with the person so they are not locked inside in case of a fire.**

OUR DEMENTIA 'TOOLBOX'

For more information about dementia related behavioral and psychological symptoms including possible triggers and coping strategies use our "How to Handle Challenging Behaviours in dementia" tool - [Link](#)

WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES AND ARTICLES OF INTEREST:

Registration for the 2015 **Ontario Gerontology Association Annual Conference** is now open - [link](#)
'The Wanderers' – TheStar article about wandering - [Link](#)

STORIES FROM THE PRC-PC CONSULT LINE

Story 1: Ms. A., a woman in her late 80's diagnosed with dementia a few years ago. For many years she enjoyed taking a daily stroll to a nearby coffee shop in the morning and drinking her coffee. Lately she has been getting lost and was found on the street by a neighbor; confused and forgetting where she was going. Her husband is frail and cannot join her on the walk and is worried about her getting lost but cannot convince her to stop going.

Story 2: Mr. B., a man in his late 70's, lives with his daughter. He was diagnosed with dementia 3 years ago. Lately he has been getting up in the middle of the night and getting dressed and wanting to go to work. His daughter keeps reminding him that it is night and that he is no longer working but this just makes him agitated and angry and they get into a fight. The daughter is exhausted and hasn't had a good night sleep in a while.

Knowledge To Practice Assessment:

- 1 Risk Assessment – Implications/possible risks of wandering.
2. Assessment of the triggers and reasons for wandering
3. Use a [DOS](#) form to track frequency of wandering and triggers
4. Assess family member's level of stress and understanding of dementia and ability to communicate and manage effectively.
5. Assess social support and services

Recommendations:

- Use the [How to Handle Challenging Behaviours in People with Dementia Tool – Wandering section](#) to discuss approaches and strategies to manage wandering.
- Offer a referral to caregiver support services for additional caregiver support and training - [Link](#)
- Refer to the Alzheimer's Society for the "[Safely Home](#)" program
- Suggest engaging community members such as neighbors, building security and even the sales person at the nearby grocery /coffee shop where the person tends to go to, to help keep an eye on the person in the community.
- Advise on the possibility of using smart alarm systems and GPS devices – [Link](#).
- Offer a referral to a local agency through [CNAP](#) for services that can provide companionship/friendly visiting that may be able to accompany the person to where they need to go.

For additional information, support, resources or case-based consultation, please contact your PRC-PC directly at: 416-586-4800 ext. 5251 or edanieli@mtsinai.on.ca or visit our website at www.mountsinai.ca/reitman/prc-pc