

## ***Non-Cancer Diagnoses in Hospice***

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### **Objectives**

- Identify common diagnoses cared for in hospice programs
- Recognize symptoms to report when caring for non-cancer hospice patients
- Verbalize interventions important to the hospice patient and their family

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### **Top Four Non-Cancer Primary Diagnoses**

- Debility (14.2%)
- Dementia (12.8%),
- Heart disease (11.2%)
- Lung disease (8.2%)

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### Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)

- Nearly 5 million people in the US have heart failure
- 550,000 new cases are diagnosed each year
- Heart failure can affect the left or right side of the heart, or both
- Congestive heart failure (CHF) is a progressive disease that most times leads to death

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### What Causes CHF

**Other causes include:**

- Previous heart attack where the heart muscle and/or vessels have been damaged
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Infections that may have damaged the heart muscle
- Severe lung disease
- Other problems with vessels and valves of the heart

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### What changes occur?

The heart tries to deal with the extra fluid by:

- Becoming larger
- Developing more muscle mass
- Pumping faster

Blood vessels narrow and the heart diverts blood away from other important organs and tissues in order to keep blood flowing to the heart and brain

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### Signs and Symptoms of Heart Failure

- Sudden weight gain
- Shortness of breath not related to exercise or exertion
- Increase in swelling of legs and feet
- Swelling or pain in the abdomen
- Trouble sleeping due to shortness of breath
- Frequent, dry, hacking cough
- Increased tiredness

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### Treatment

- Treatment is designed to:
  - Lessen the fatigue
  - Reduce the shortness of breath
  - Decrease the tissue swelling
- There are a variety of medications that can be utilized to decrease these symptoms

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### What is Your Role As a Hospice Aide?

- Care for the patient with CHF will focus on comfort measures – to both the patient and family
- The patient's difficulty breathing may often cause the patient and family extreme stress
- The lack of oxygen may also cause the patient to experience delirium – that further frightens the family caregiver
- Provide assistance with Activities of Daily Living

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### What is Your Role As a Hospice Aide?

- Watch carefully for pressure sores due to decreased activity and/or swelling in limbs and sacrum
- Encourage patient to elevate legs unless contraindicated
- Have patient avoid tight shoes, knee-high stockings or other clothing that restricts the circulation
- Encourage small, frequent meals or snacks to avoid feeling overfull

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### Questions

- What does CHF stand for?
- Name two symptoms of CHF.
- When is the CHF patient admitted to hospice?
- List three concerns you would report to the nurse related to your patient with CHF.
- Is it true that more people die from heart disease than any other disease in the US?

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### Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis

- Also called ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease
- More common in men
- Typically affects people 40 to 60 years old
- Only 5-10% of all cases are inherited
- 5,000 new cases are diagnosed each year

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Signs & Symptoms

- Difficulty swallowing
- Slurred speech
- Muscle cramps or twitching
- Weakness in leg or arm
- Unsteady gait
- Stumbling or tripping
- Difficulty with buttons, zippers etc.

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Late Signs & Symptoms

As the disease progresses the following will occur:

- Loss of arm/hand and leg function
- Inability to chew and swallow
- Difficulty breathing and eventual loss of independent respiration

*Note: Cognitive ability is usually not affected*

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Multiple Sclerosis

- Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a disease of the central nervous system
- MS affects the fatty sheath (myelin sheath) that surrounds the nerve fibers
- Usually affects more women than men
- Onset around ages 20 - 40 years
- There is no cure, but treatment focuses on symptom management

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Signs & Symptoms

- Vision impairment
- Loss of sensation in limbs
- Clumsiness or coordination problems
- Fatigue and weakness
- Loss of bladder control
- Memory loss and problems thinking

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What is Your Role As a Hospice Aide?

- Help patient keep stress level to a minimum
- Report any signs of depression
- Encourage patient to follow prescribed exercise program
- Encourage patient to minimize activity during the hottest part of the day

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Questions

- What is another name for ALS?
- Is there a known cause of ALS?
- Name 2 signs/symptoms of ALS.
- Is there a cure for Multiple Sclerosis?
- Why is it significant to know the symptoms of MS when working with hospice patients.

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### What is a Stroke/CVA?

- Cerebrovascular Accident=CVA
- A stroke can occur when a blood clot blocks the blood flow to the brain
- Or when there is a bleed in the brain that blocks the blood flow
- Brain damage occurs after the blockage—cells begin to die

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### Types of stroke

#### **Acute Stroke**

- Hospice criteria for a sudden stroke is there is one of the following conditions for at least three days
  - Coma
  - Persistent vegetative state
  - Severely reduced level of consciousness with abnormal muscle contraction

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### Caring for the Acute Stroke Patient

- Skin Care
- Teaching family about
  - Skin Care
  - Turning
  - Positioning
    - Don't lay on affected side more than 1 hour at the time
    - Don't pull on affected side
  - Precautions with oral intake
  - Safety precautions

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## Care of Acute Stroke Continued

- Emotional support
- Communication:
  - Talk to patient as if they can hear you, whether they respond or not
  - Support family
  - Encourage family to talk to patient
  - Encourage family to continue to touch the patient
    - Hold their hand
    - Hug

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## Types of Stroke

### Chronic Stroke

- Leaves the person with significant neurological deficiencies
- Some will be able to regain some of their lost function with rehab
- Others will continue to decline, regardless of the rehab efforts

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## Risk Factors for Chronic Stroke Patients

- Trouble swallowing—dysphagia
- Aspiration pneumonia
- Weight loss
- Recurrent Urinary Tract Infections (UTI)
- Blood infections
- Fever— cause unknown

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## Chronic Stroke and Hospice

- Patients have major deficits
- Stroke may be secondary to terminal condition
- Hospice manages symptoms that encompass the effects of a stroke
- The severity of their symptoms and other co-morbidities help determine when the patient with a stroke is eligible for hospice

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## Symptom Management

### Physical

- Paralysis (may be right side, left side, upper extremity and/or lower extremity)
- Weakness/Loss of balance
- Bowel/bladder incontinence
- Dysphagia-Difficulty swallowing
- Aphasia- May Destroy the ability to communicate
- Pressure Ulcers
- Falls
- Seizures

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## Bowel/Bladder

- Maintain record of Bowel/Bladder activity
  - Important: Constipation potentially is an ongoing problem
  - Keep clean and dry
  - Assess skin for troubled areas-report
  - Educate family of importance
    - To keep clean and dry
    - Monitor bowel movements

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### Paralysis/Weakness

- Practice safety at all times
- If unable to handle alone, ask for help
- Familiarize with DME being utilized by patient
- Assess for how much patient can do for self
- Determine if deficit on dominant side
- Use appropriate body mechanics when moving patient
- Include range of motion in personal care if not contraindicated

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### Challenges with Dysphagia

- Strangle easily
- Aspirate
  - Aspiration Pneumonia
- “Cheeking food” or meds

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### Interventions

#### Treatment:

- Eat type of food consistency ordered– liquids, soft, pureed
- Eat slowly-sweep affected side of mouth frequently while eating
- Do not lay down immediately after eating
- May become unable to eat at all
- Educate family/ Emotional support

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## Aphasia

- Be patient
- Difficult for patient to express self
- Re-assure patient “it is ok”
- Recognize the frustration this causes the patient
- Ask simple questions– yes/no may be less stressful for patient

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## Skin Breakdown

- Keep clean and dry
- Assess skin each visit during personal care for areas of concern, paying close attention to pressure areas
- Report any concerns to supervisor
- Encourage patient/caregiver to turn at least every two hours
- Encourage not to lay on affected side more than an hour at the time

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## Symptom Management

- Emotional
  - Presence/ Listening
  - Supportive role
  - Medications
  - Therapy
- Treatment
  - Presence/ Listening
  - Supportive role
  - Medications
  - Therapy

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### Emotional Symptom Strategies

- Offer support to patient and family
- Listen carefully/ observe
- Give encouragement as appropriate
- Take your time if dealing with cognitive impairments
- Use simple clear language

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### Questions

- Stroke is the 4<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the US
- Name two interventions for the patient with dysphagia
- List three emotional support interventions
- Patience is important when dealing with the patient with aphasia
- Presence is a powerful intervention with the hospice patient/family

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