

COMMON SOURCES OF BURDENSOME CARE

Burdensome care: Although treatments are INTENDED to reduce or eliminate problems, in the late stage of dementia they also cause distress and discomfort. An important starting point is to think about the EFFECT of care on the person with dementia.

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)

- ✓ Broken ribs/pain
- ✓ Greater confusion, delirium
- ✓ Greater cognitive impairment than before arrest
- ✓ Traumatic to family members

Hospitalization

- ✓ Experience is confusing, distressing, anxiety/fear provoking
- ✓ Functional abilities decline as a result
- ✓ 75% are avoidable
- ✓ Unnecessary: Pneumonia treated as effectively in nursing home as hospital
- ✓ Contrary to person's preferences

Infections

- ✓ Leading cause of hospitalization is infections and fevers
- ✓ Antibiotic treatment in terminal dementia: value is not clear
 - Survival, symptom relief not clearly superior to comfort measures
 - Risk adverse effects: GI upset, diarrhea
- ✓ Discomfort with diagnostics: blood draw, X-ray, sputum sample, urine sample by catheterization

Eating Problems

- ✓ Hallmark of advanced dementia is eating/swallowing problems
- ✓ Pocketing, spitting food; delayed swallowing, aspiration
- ✓ Inability to feed self; loss of interest in food
- ✓ Feeding tubes: still common but not helpful
- ✓ Discomfort, delirium increased
- ✓ Survival rates not improved over hand feeding
- ✓ Preferred approach: self or hand feeding
- ✓ Smaller portions, finger foods, favorite foods, nutritional supplements
- ✓ High calorie/high nutrition/low volume diet