

# 7

## SIGNS THAT SOMEONE IN THE WAITING ROOM MIGHT HAVE DEMENTIA

### 1

#### MEMORY LOSS

like forgetting the day or time of an appointment.

### 2

#### CONFUSION ABOUT WHERE TO GO

coming to the wrong clinic or on the wrong day or at the wrong time.

### 3

#### PROBLEMS WITH SPEAKING

or understanding words like being confused by what the receptionist says after it has been repeated several times.

### 4

#### CHALLENGES FINDING SOLUTIONS

to problems – like where to sit in the waiting room.

### 5

#### DIFFICULTY WITH ORDINARY TASKS

like completing clinic forms or trouble following directions, such as "Follow me."

### 6

#### TROUBLE INTERPRETING IMAGES

like thinking a pattern in the clinic waiting room carpet is a snake or is moving.

### 7

#### CHANGES IN PERSONALITY OR MOOD

like being mean or yelling at staff or family members when previously was always very pleasant.

## HELP *is Here*

A SERIES OF BOOKS

[www.dementiahelpishere.org](http://www.dementiahelpishere.org)

When someone you love has dementia and a plain language, culturally adapted Spanish translation

When a Resident has Dementia for senior living residences, and a separate **Leader Manual** to teach it to staff

# REMEMBER! DEMENTIA IS BRAIN FAILURE!

When someone has dementia, their brain doesn't work like it used to, and they need special help.

Busy, noisy waiting rooms provide too much input for many people who have dementia. You may need to find a quiet place for someone who has dementia to wait for an appointment.

Never argue with someone who has dementia. If someone with dementia demands to be taken to an exam room immediately, rather than saying, "No", say "I'll see if I can make that happen for you." Then find a quiet place for the person to wait.

**SPECIAL NOTE TO OFFICES WHERE PATIENTS HAVE BLOOD DRAWS.** After the blood draw, take the patient directly to a room rather than back to the waiting room. This will be less confusing for the patient and family member.

## SIGNS THAT SOMEONE IN THE WAITING ROOM MIGHT HAVE DEMENTIA

	For instance...	If this happens...	How you could help...
1 MEMORY LOSS	Forgetting the day or time of an appointment.	<i>The person may call several times – sometimes within 5 minutes – to make an appointment.</i> <i>A family member begins to come with the person, but the person won't let the family member go into the exam room.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be very friendly and simply confirm the appointment. Tell the person's clinical provider what is happening.</li> <li>Tell the person's clinical provider.</li> </ul>
2 CONFUSION ABOUT WHERE TO GO	Coming to the wrong clinic or on the wrong day or at the wrong time.	<i>If the person comes to the wrong clinic.</i> <i>If the person comes on the wrong day or at the wrong time.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remember to smile and not argue with them. Try to see how you might ease their way to the correct office. Be mindful of your office protocol for this situation.</li> <li>Smile and ask them to wait while you sort things out. Remember to not argue with them. Check with the medical assistant to see if the patient can be seen, anyway.</li> </ul>
3 PROBLEMS SPEAKING OR UNDERSTANDING WORDS	Being confused by what the receptionist says after it has been repeated several times.	<i>The person may not understand that they need to pay a co-pay or try to pay with an unsigned check or the wrong amount.</i> <i>The person may try to leave the clinic before the appointment.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make simple, short requests. Try to be as helpful as you can, quietly, without making a fuss. Tell the person's clinical provider that the person is having difficulty understanding and providing the copay.</li> <li>Alert the medical assistant who rooms patients to see if they can find a room for the person.</li> </ul>
4 CHALLENGES FINDING SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS	Having trouble deciding where to sit in the waiting room.	<i>The person may change seats in the waiting room many times or pace the floor.</i> <i>The person may have a toileting accident sitting in a chair in the waiting room.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smile and be pleasant. Ask if you can find them a magazine or get them anything.</li> <li>Smile and be pleasant. The person with dementia and the family member will be embarrassed. Ask the medical assistant to find a room for the person and call janitorial services to clean up the chair.</li> </ul>
5 DIFFICULTY WITH ORDINARY TASKS	Having trouble completing clinic forms or trouble following directions, such as "Follow me."	<i>The person cannot correctly complete the health questions form.</i> <i>The family member writes the check for the co-pay, but the person with dementia objects and makes a fuss.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smile and thank them for completing the health questions form, even if they didn't. Give the blank form to the medical assistant and explain the person did their best.</li> <li>Write the receipt later, and give it to the family member without alerting the person with dementia.</li> </ul>
6 TROUBLE INTERPRETING IMAGES	Being afraid that a pattern in the clinic waiting room carpet is a snake or is moving.	<i>The person may refuse to walk across a part of the waiting room or across a mat in front of a door.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walk across the carpet or mat yourself to show them that it is safe. Offer to hold their hand or elbow as they walk.</li> </ul>
7 CHANGES IN PERSONALITY	Like being mean or yelling at staff or family members when was always very pleasant before.	<i>The person is mean to the family member who came with them.</i> <i>The person yells at the family member when he/she tries to go with them to see the clinical provider.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the family member is uncomfortable, see if the medical assistant can find a room for the person. Smile, be supportive, and follow your office protocol for this situation.</li> <li>Ask the medical assistant to tell the clinical provider that a family member would like to be present.</li> </ul>

## HELP is Here

When someone in the waiting room has dementia

Compliments of PROVIDENCE Health & Services

This pamphlet is part of the *Help is Here* series, which includes **Help is Here: When someone you love has dementia** (and a culturally adapted, plain language Spanish translation version). You can see the *Help is Here* series at [www.dementiahelphere.org](http://www.dementiahelphere.org). The *Help is Here* series is funded by Providence Foundations, which owns the copyrights to all the books. Profits, if any, from the sales of books return to the *Help is Here* Foundation account to fund education for those who care for people with dementia. If you have questions about the *Help is Here* series, please contact Providence – Oregon, Senior Health Program at 503-893-7444.