

Mental Health

Psychiatric Disorders

Case Study 141

Name _____ Class/Group _____ Date _____

Group Members _____

► Scenario

You are the nurse working triage in the emergency department. This afternoon, a woman brings in her father, K.B., who is 74 years old. The daughter reports that over the past year she has noticed her father has progressively had problems with his mental capacity. These changes have developed gradually but seem to be getting worse. At times he is alert and at other times he seems disoriented, depressed, and tearful. He is forgetting things and doing things out of the ordinary, such as placing the milk in the cupboard and sugar in the refrigerator. K.B. reports that he has been having memory problems for the past year and at times has difficulty remembering the names of family members and friends. His neighbor found him down the street 2 days ago, and K.B. did not know where he was. This morning he thought it was nighttime and wondered what his daughter was doing at his house. He could not pour his own coffee, and he seems to be getting more agitated. A review of his past medical history is significant for hypercholesterolemia and coronary artery disease. He had a myocardial infarction 5 years ago. K.B.'s vital signs today are all within normal limits.

1. What are some cognitive changes seen in a number of elderly patients?

2. You know that physiologic age-related changes in the elderly can influence cognitive functioning. Name and discuss one.

3. For each behavior listed, specify whether it is associated with delirium (DL) or dementia (DM).
 - _____ a. Gradual and insidious onset
 - _____ b. Hallucinations or delusions
 - _____ c. A sudden, acute onset of symptoms
 - _____ d. Progressive functional impairment
 - _____ e. Inability to perform activities of daily living (ADLs)
 - _____ f. Incoherent interactions with others
 - _____ g. Possible wandering behavior
 - _____ h. Behavioral disorders that often worsen at night

4. Based on the information provided by the daughter, do you think K.B. is showing signs of delirium or dementia? Explain.
5. You know that there are several types of dementia that result in cognitive changes. List two of these types of dementia.
6. How can the level or degree of the dementia impairment be determined?
7. A number of diagnostic tests have been ordered for K.B. From the tests listed, which would be used to diagnose dementia?
- Mental status examinations
 - Toxicology screen
 - Mini-Mental State Examination
 - Electrocardiogram
 - Electroencephalogram
 - Complete metabolic panel
 - Complete blood count with differential
 - Thyroid function tests
 - Colonoscopy
 - Rapid plasma reagin (RPR) test
 - Serum B₁₂ level
 - Bleeding time
 - Human immunodeficiency virus screening
 - Liver function tests
 - Vision and hearing evaluation
 - Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)

