

# Evaluation of Problem Behaviors in People with Dementia

## Common Causes of Problem Behaviors

### Physical:

- Pain
- Hunger
- Constipation, urinary retention
- Fatigue, insomnia, poor sleep

### Psychological:

- Anxiety, fear, depression
- Impaired speech, frustration
- Boredom
- Autonomy/privacy

### Environmental:

- Caregiver approaches
- Institutional routines, expectations and demands
- Misinterpretation of events/setting
- Over/under-stimulation
- Changes from normal routine

### Delirium, secondary to medical issues such as:

- Medication side effects
- Infections
- Metabolic/electrolyte disturbances
- Dehydration

## Consider the Following Assessments

### Check Vitals:

- Temperature, pulse, blood pressure, respiration, oxygen saturation

### Physical Assessment:

- Signs of constipation or urinary retention
- Changes in breath sounds
- Peripheral edema
- Fluid status: orthostatic blood pressure, mucous membranes

### Common Sources of Pain:

- Bed sores, other skin lesions, eye pain from corneal abrasion
- Joint pain, other musculoskeletal pain, foot pain (poorly fitting shoes)
- Oral pain related to dentures/mouth ulceration

### Sensory:

- Hearing: check hearing aids, ear wax
- Vision: check glasses

### Delirium Assessment:

- See *Delirium Assessment and Management*

### Urinalysis, or other urinary symptoms

### Blood glucose, CBC with differential, electrolytes if appropriate

### Drug side effects:

- See *Drugs that May Cause Delirium or Problem Behaviors*

### Recent changes: environmental, routine, family, drugs, medical