



## **Supporting carers, family and friends of people with dementia**

Have you/ your relative/ friend been given a current or recent diagnosis of dementia? The Alzheimer's Society will be happy to help you with information, support and advice.

Do you care for a person with dementia and they are presently in hospital;

If you have any questions or require support, advice or want to raise a concern these can usually be resolved immediately with the staff who are looking after the patient. This may be their nurse, doctor or health worker. Explain what has happened and they will do their best to put things right as quickly as possible or contact Margaret Davies, Matron for Dementia on Ext 7413 or via the bleep system on 2215, or Joan Wright, Dementia Audit Nurse on Ext 8019 or via bleep system 2050.

If you want to talk to someone not directly involved in your/ your relatives or friends care you may contact the Patient Relations Team on Freephone 0800 432 0251 or email [wih-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:wih-tr.pals@nhs.net)

This leaflet contains;

- A general overview of dementia
- A description of Wirral University Teaching Hospital (NHS Foundation Trust) WUTH hospital's Forget-Me-Not and This is Me scheme
- Hospital tips for carers
- Where to go for advice and support upon discharge from hospital



## **Do you or someone you care for have dementia?**

If you or someone close to you has a diagnosis of dementia, you may be feeling angry, frustrated, worried, afraid, sad, lonely, isolated, or maybe even relieved. These are all normal feelings. How you feel may vary from day to day. When someone you care for is admitted to hospital, this can escalate any of these feelings. At WUTH, we want to make families and carers feel cared for and supported as well as the patient. We also acknowledge and recognise that the family carer is the expert for that person with dementia.

We use the Forget-Me-Not and the This is Me to help us to see the person and not the diagnosis, to know the person as well as their condition and to care for that person as an individual with compassion, dignity and respect. If you/ your relative/friend doesn't have either of these, please inform a member of staff.



## **The importance of diagnosing dementia**

An accurate diagnosis of dementia is important. It helps you and your carer to prepare and plan for the future. It can also help you to find out about possible treatments, support and advice that can make a difference to both the person and yourself.

Dementia can be diagnosed by a General Practitioner or at a memory clinic. A hospital doctor doesn't diagnose dementia, but can help by finding, assessing and referring the person back to the General Practitioner for further assessments and tests.



## **Understanding what dementia is and what causes it**

What is dementia? The term dementia describes a set of symptoms which occur when the brain is damaged by certain diseases. The most common types of dementia are Alzheimer's disease and Vascular dementia, but there are many others. Some of the most obvious symptoms of dementia are:

### Memory loss

- Poor short term memory
- Inability to recall recent conversations
- Cannot remember what happened a few hours ago

### Communication problems

- Cannot find a word
- Loss of vocabulary
- Cannot spell familiar words

### Mood changes

- Rapid movement from calm to angry
- Becoming withdrawn
- Frightened about everything and nothing

There are many things we can do while you/ your relative/friend is in hospital to help with caring and communicating, we also need your help to ensure that he/she receives the most appropriate care and that staff recognise the patient as an individual.



The Forget-Me-Not symbol; *forget me not* is displayed on the patient information board.

The Forget-Me-Not card; This is displayed on the patient's locker which summarises information about the patient, such as their likes and dislikes. Staff will be happy to support you in completing the card. With the patient's and your permission, this is clearly visible so staff recognise the patient's individual needs.

(Tip, the Forget-Me-Not card should be with the patient throughout their journey to identify needs along that journey, for example when the patient attends the X-Ray department)

Communicating with pictures booklet; This is provided for all patients when a patient has communication problems, including patients with dementia. Please take this booklet home with you as an aide for you as a carer which may help you and the patient after discharge.

This is Me; We encourage and recommend that every person with dementia or their carer/friend fills in this leaflet. It provides detailed information about a person's likes, dislikes, hobbies, what causes anxiety etc.

(Tip- please ask for the This is Me to be given back to you as the carer or the patient before discharge. It is the patient's own leaflet. You may like to keep the original one and photocopy to give to staff whenever a hospital visit is necessary)

Carers Survey; The questionnaire in this information pack invites you to express your views. Your views matter to us and will inform us if our practice is good, or practice which may not meet our expectations to bring about change. Please complete and return in the prepaid envelope provided.

### **General Information**

**Dementia Care Bundle;** Every patient with dementia has a dementia care bundle, this means that they receive personalised nursing care to ensure that all appropriate assessments and care is given.

**Keep things normal;** ensure that the patient uses their dentures, glasses and hearing aids as much as possible. Where possible, put a name or initial on items to avoid them being mislaid.

**Personalise the patient's environment;** Familiar items such as photograph albums, a favourite blanket, stuffed animal or an activity they usually enjoy at home can help to reduce anxiety in a different and unfamiliar environment. Please check with staff about the items you wish to bring in, label the items where possible and bring copies of photographs rather than originals to avoid them being mislaid.



*forget me not* **For more information**

**There are a number of organisations where you can find out more information about support on returning home; e.g. having a key safe fitted, local support groups, activities.**

Alzheimer's Society on 0300 222 1122

The Alzheimer's Society will be happy to help you with information, support and advice. A range of fact sheets are available within this pack.

Wirral age UK 0151 482 3456 or email [enquiries@ageukwirral.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ageukwirral.org.uk)

Dementia UK; 020 7697 4160