



Dementia

Dementia is a general term used to describe a decline in cognitive ability, including memory loss, thinking ability, and communication skills. There are several types of dementia, and each type affects different parts of the brain.

Types of Dementia

1. **Alzheimer's disease:** The most common form of dementia, Alzheimer's disease, is a progressive brain disorder that affects memory, thinking, and behaviour. It is characterised by the accumulation of abnormal proteins in the brain, which cause damage and eventually kill brain cells.
2. **Vascular dementia:** This type of dementia is caused by damage to the blood vessels in the brain. It can result from strokes or other conditions that affect the blood supply to the brain.
3. **Lewy body dementia:** This type of dementia is caused by the buildup of abnormal proteins in the brain, known as Lewy bodies. Symptoms may include hallucinations, fluctuating alertness, and movement problems.
4. **Frontotemporal dementia:** This type of dementia affects the front and sides of the brain, causing changes in behaviour, language, and personality. It typically affects younger people than other types of dementia.
5. **Mixed dementia:** Some people may have a combination of two or more types of dementia, such as Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia.

It's important to note that while each type of dementia has unique characteristics, there is often overlap in symptoms and some people may have a combination of different types.

Neuropsychological Assessments

Neuropsychological assessment can be a valuable tool in helping to diagnose and manage dementia. A neuropsychological assessment is a comprehensive evaluation of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural functioning, conducted by a trained neuropsychologist.

The assessment can help to:

1. **Diagnose dementia:** Neuropsychological assessment can help to identify the cognitive deficits associated with different types of dementia, such as Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, or frontotemporal dementia. By evaluating a person's memory, attention, language, and other cognitive abilities, a neuropsychologist can identify the specific cognitive impairments associated with the different types of dementia.
2. **Track disease progression:** Neuropsychological assessments can be used to monitor changes in cognitive function over time, providing valuable information about the progression of the disease.
3. **Develop treatment plans:** Neuropsychological assessments can help to identify the specific cognitive deficits that need to be addressed in developing a treatment plan for dementia. For example, if a person with dementia has difficulty with memory, the treatment plan may include learning memory strategies or other interventions to improve memory function.



4. Provide guidance for caregivers: Neuropsychological assessments can help to identify the specific needs of individuals with dementia and provide guidance to caregivers on how to best support and care for them.

Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies are techniques that can be used to improve cognitive function and manage the symptoms of dementia. Here are some cognitive strategies that can be helpful for people with dementia:

1. Use memory aids: Memory aids, such as calendars, to-do lists, and reminders, can help people with dementia to remember important information and daily tasks.
2. Break tasks into smaller steps: Complex tasks can be overwhelming for people with dementia. Breaking tasks into smaller, more manageable steps can make them more achievable and reduce frustration.
3. Use visual cues: Visual cues, such as pictures or diagrams, can help people with dementia to understand and remember information more easily.
4. Repeat information: Repetition can be helpful for people with dementia who may have difficulty remembering information. Repeating important information several times can help to reinforce it in their memory.
5. Engage in stimulating activities: Engaging in stimulating activities, such as puzzles, games, or hobbies, can help to keep the brain active and may slow the progression of dementia.
6. Use technology: Technology can be a helpful tool for people with dementia, such as voice-activated devices or apps that can help with reminders, memory training, and communication.
7. Stay socially engaged: Social interaction can help to improve cognitive function and reduce feelings of isolation and depression. Encouraging people with dementia to participate in social activities, such as group outings or visits with family and friends, can be beneficial.

Overall, cognitive strategies can help people with dementia to manage their symptoms and maintain their cognitive function, improving their quality of life.

Hardwick Psychological Services psychologists can assist with Neuropsychological Assessment in the case of memory concerns or suspected Dementia, and can also assist with support for the individual and the family following diagnosis.

