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Understanding Alzheimer's dementia patient's complex behavioral changes

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Alzheimer's disease is a progressive brain disease that destroys memory and thinking skills and eventually, the ability to carry out the simplest tasks of daily living. Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging. Alzheimer's disease is named after Dr. Alois Alzheimer, a German physician. In 1906, Dr. Alzheimer described changes in the brain tissue of a woman who died of an unusual illness that robbed her of her memories and caused personality changes. After her death, he found in her brain abnormal clumps (now called amyloid plaques) and tangled bundles of fibers (now called neurofibrillary tangles). These plaques and tangles are now considered the hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease. The clinical word Dementia is the umbrella term of this progressive disease and the most common type of dementia is Alzheimer's.

As the disease progresses, behavioral and personality changes will be manifested. Patient may perceive the care giver or the environment as a threat. The patient will start to be distrusting, fearful or frustrated or agitated. The core concern of caregivers (family or aide) circumnavigate in how to effectively response to the resident. Dealing with the patient with alzheimer's demetia can be challenging. This presentation will focus on strategies when patients are emotionally, verbally or physically unstable or combative.

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