ST. FRANCIS 24/7 CALL CENTER: (321) 269-4240

St. Francis REFLECTIONS® Hospice
Established 1977 • Licensed 1990

Lewy Body Dementia

Lewy body dementia is a type of progressive dementia associated with abnormal protein deposits (Lewy bodies) in the brain.

Common Symptoms:

Symptoms may differ from person to person

- Fluctuating cognition, with periods of confusion or alertness
- Visual hallucinations (seeing things that are not there)
- Parkinsonian symptoms, such as tremors and stiffness
- Difficulty with movement and balance
- Sleep disturbances

Causes:

Potential causes:

- The exact cause is unknown, but genetic and environmental factors may contribute as well as abnormal deposits of protein in the brain, affecting movement and cognition.

Hospice Considerations:

Lewy body dementia often presents with complex symptoms. While there is no cure, treatments aim to manage cognitive and physical symptoms, shifting to palliative care in hospice.

- **Advanced Symptoms:** When cognitive decline is profound, and the patient experiences severe movement disorders or hallucinations that impair daily function.
- **Symptom Management:** Difficulty managing symptoms such as fluctuating cognition, severe motor symptoms, and potential falls due to instability becomes paramount.
- **End-of-Life Care:** Prioritizing comfort and emotional support for the patient and family, hospice care focuses on quality of life in the final stages of the disease.

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Symptom Management Tips:

- **Cognitive Support:** Use familiar routines and engage in memory-enhancing activities to reduce confusion.
- **Manage Hallucinations:** Reassure the patient during hallucinations and avoid arguing; use distraction techniques if necessary.
- **Motor Support:** Facilitate light physical activity (as tolerated) to improve movement and balance.

How to Help:

- **Patient Tips:**
  - **Stay Engaged:** Participate in favorite activities and hobbies that stimulate cognitive function and provide joy.
  - **Communicate Clearly:** Use simple language and allow time for processing responses.
  - **Rest Regularly:** Prioritize rest to help manage fatigue and confusion.

- **Caregiver Tips:**
  - **Provide Emotional Reassurance:** Be patient and supportive, validating the patient's feelings during moments of confusion or fear.
  - **Create a Safe Environment:** Modify the home to reduce hazards and ensure safety, especially regarding falls.
  - **Monitor Symptoms:** Keep an eye on any behavioral changes or worsening symptoms, communicating these to the hospice team.

St. Francis Reflections is always available to assist with any questions or concerns 24/7

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