

# OVERVIEW OF DEMENTIA SKILLS COURSE

Dr Tan Boon Yeow

With the rapid ageing of the Singapore population, the number of patients with dementia is likely to increase. Family physicians are often the first and main contact for the elderly. As a result, family physicians are in the ideal situation to facilitate identification of dementia and early diagnosis. Currently, specialists are managing dementia but as the numbers increase, specialist service will not be able to cope with the patient load. It is therefore of paramount importance that dementia is managed primarily by the family physicians, in close collaboration with the specialists.

We have approached the skills course by attempting to answer the common questions and concerns that a family physician may face in the management of a patient with dementia.

In the first unit, we look at what dementia<sup>1</sup> is all about and in the process hope to dispel the myth that dementia is part of normal ageing. Armed with a better understanding of dementia, we proceed to answer the question of “How do I know my patient has dementia?” Dr Chong MS gives us a 4-step approach to dementia evaluation in unit 2. The next 3 units explore the various options available in the treatment of patients with dementia. These treatment strategies usually target the ‘ABC’ domains of the disease: ‘A’ for ‘ADL-Activities of daily living (ADL)’ or the functioning level of the patient, ‘B’ refers to ‘BPSD – Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia’, defined by Finkel and Burns as “Symptoms of disturbed perception, thought content, mood, or behaviour that frequently occur in patients with dementia”, and ‘C’, the ‘Cognitive’ functions. Unit 6 looks at a very important aspect of dementia care which we as family physicians can play a big role in; that is, the caring of the family and caregivers of patients with dementia.

The workshop session that follows aims to complement the 6 units by looking at the practical aspects of dementia care like counselling the caregiver and using behavioural management to deal with wandering and agitation. Case studies will also be used to illustrate the common diagnostic dilemmas associated with dementia. Finally, the various community resources available in the community will also be explored and family physicians will be encouraged to be part of the various networks available in the care of the demented patient.

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TAN BOON YEOW, Chairman, Eldercare SIG, College of Family Physicians Singapore

Member, National Dementia workgroup, MOH

Adj. Asst Professor, Department of Community, Occupational and Family Medicine, NUS

Head, Medical Services, St Luke's Hospital Ltd

## COURSE OUTLINE AND CME POINTS

This skills course is made up of the following components. You can choose to participate in one or more parts of it. The CME points that will be awarded are also indicated below.

### Components and CME Points

- κ Distance learning course – 6 units – each unit 1 CME point
- κ 2 Seminars (2 CME points each)
- κ 2 Workshops (2 CME points each)
- κ Reading papers on Dementia – read 5 out of 10 recommended journals.

### Distance Learning Course

Unit 1 : Overview of Dementia – What Is It?

*(Dr Christopher Chen Li-Hsian)*

Unit 2 : Diagnosis of Dementia – How Do I Know That My Patient Has Dementia?

*(Dr Chong Mei Sian)*

Unit 3 : Treatment of Dementia – An Overview

*(Dr Joshua Kua Hai Kiat)*

Unit 4 : Pharmacological Treatment

*(Dr Lim Wee Shiong)*

Unit 5 : Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD)

*(Dr Ng Li-Ling)*

Unit 6 : Family Caregivers and Caregiving in Dementia

*(Dr Philip Yap Lin Kiat & Ms Jenny Goh Yen Ni)*

## COURSE TOPIC DETAILS

### Unit 1: Overview of Dementia – What Is It?

- κ The epidemiology of dementia in Asia
- κ Risk factors for dementia
- κ Future prospects for diagnosis and treatment

### Unit 2: Diagnosis of Dementia – How Do I Know That My Patient Has Dementia?

- κ Mild cognitive impairment
- κ Assessment

### Unit 3: Treatment of Dementia – An Overview

- κ The ‘ABC’ of dementia
- κ Pharmacological interventions
- κ Psychosocial interventions
- κ Dementia-related services

### Unit 4: Pharmacological Treatment of Dementia

- κ Overview
- κ Cholinesterase inhibitors
- κ NMDA antagonists
- κ Common issues in the use of dementia-specific drugs

### Unit 5: Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD)

- κ Definition
- κ Assessment
- κ Management

### Unit 6: Family Caregivers and Caregiving in Dementia

- κ The importance of caregiving
- κ Understanding the dementia caregiver
- κ Caregiver burden
- κ Caregiver intervention

## FACE-TO-FACE SESSIONS

### Seminar 1: 18 March 2006

2.00pm – 4.00pm

Unit 1 : Overview of Dementia – What Is It?

*(Dr Christopher Chen Li-Hsian)*

Unit 2 : Diagnosis of Dementia – “How Do I Know That My Patient Has Dementia?”

*(Dr Chong Mei Sian)*

Unit 3 : Treatment of Dementia – An Overview

*(Dr Joshua Kua Hai Kiat)*

### Workshop 1: 18 March 2006

4.15pm – 6.30pm

1) How to screen and assess a patient for memory problems?

*(Dr Christopher Chen Li-Hsian & Mr Donald Yeo)*

2) Diagnostic dilemma I: How to differentiate between MCI vs early dementia and vascular vs Alzheimer's dementia?

*(Dr Chong Mei Sian & Dr Joshua Kua Hai Kiat)*

3) Diagnostic dilemma II: How to differentiate between depression vs dementia and delirium vs dementia?

*(Dr Ong Pui Sim & Dr Tan Boon Yeow)*

### Seminar 2: 25 March 2006

2.00pm – 4.00pm

Unit 4 : Pharmacological Treatment of Dementia

*(Dr Lim Wee Shiong)*

Unit 5 : Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD)

*(Dr Ng Li-Ling)*

Unit 6 : Family Caregiver and Caregiving in Dementia

*(Dr Philip Yap Lin Kiat)*

### Workshop 2: 25 March 2006

4.15pm – 6.30pm

1) How to manage wandering and agitation in dementia?

*(Dr Chin Jing Jih & Dr Chow Yeow Leng)*

2) How to counsel caregivers in the care of dementia patients?

*(Ms Teo Puay Leng, Ms Oh Wai Ching & Ms Peh Kim Choo)*

3) What are the community resources available for dementia care? *(Dr Ng Li-Ling & Mrs Theresa Lee)*