

Dementia Pearls: Key Points

An office visit to evaluate cognitive concerns:

A dedicated follow-up visit just for this: *family member* really needs to come too.
 Ask about alcohol use, depression, sleep apnea, hearing loss.
 Order screening labs for B12 and TSH.
 Do a quick MoCA. Combine with input from a family member if possible.
 If MoCA score low, schedule a 2nd review visit, encourage a family meeting.

A dementia to-do checklist to work through, over several visits:

Talk about what is dementia. Emphasize many years of good quality of life.
 If mild cognitive impairment: Frame it as likely dementia, but discuss 20% chance that their cognition might be almost the same in 5-10 years.
 Prioritize the need for patient to fill out a DPOA with 2 alternates.
 Begin planning the process of a retirement from driving (see below.)
 As impairments worsen, discuss option of donepezil. But OK to not start really early.

Planning retirement from driving: a stepwise approach:

Discuss it early. Emphasize planning, and your concerns about safety.
 Suggest voluntary on the road testing.
 Often the next step is to discuss state reporting, rules and options.
 The final nuclear option which thankfully is rarely needed: take away the car keys.

Managing difficult behaviors:

Stop oxybutynin, Ambien, benzodiazepines, Benadryl, Tylenol PM.
 Recommend family reads a book such as "Learning to Speak Alzheimer's"
 Non-medication approaches (as per book "The 36-hour Day") should be first line.
 Antipsychotics are often needed, e.g. quetiapine / risperidone. (Titrate up every 3 days.)
 Schedule a taper trial to off every 3-6 months. Titrate back up if needed.
 Antipsychotics are potentially **dangerous** for patients with **Lewy Body Dementia**.

Advance care planning:

Offer a Dementia Directive to everyone over age 65. www.dementia-directive.org
 Prioritize the need for patient to fill out a DPOA with 2 alternates.
 Discuss goals of care. What would patient with dementia have wanted?
 "If person from 10 years ago could look down on themselves now, what would they want?"
 Filling out a POLST form is a great way to document and move the conversation forward.