

## **Introduction for the primary care tract**

Welcome to the DETAdoc website for primary care providers. Nurse practitioners play an important role in the assessment and management of persons with dementia. Practitioners have the unique perspective of understanding diagnostics, therapeutics, and hands-on care. This site contains extensive information for your nursing colleague and educational materials for the patient's families. This website contains important information for the clinician including: 1) update on common causes of dementia, 2) update on available therapies for dementia, 3) management of behavioral problems, 4) description of psychotropic medications, 5) hospital care for the demented patient, 6) end of life management.

### **1. Update on causes of dementia**

Several hundred different clinical conditions can produce cognitive loss. The primary care clinician should be familiar with the five most common causes of dementia. The clinician should be able to distinguish between age-associated memory impairment versus mild cognitive impairment versus Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

### **2. Update on treatment**

Treatments evolve rapidly. This brief summary provides a rough estimate of efficacy and tolerability for commonly prescribed medications. It also provides the clinician with information on commonly asked questions about treatment.

### **3. Neuropsychiatric management**

Behavioral and psychiatric complications are common in the mid to later stages of dementia. This segment reviews prescription of psychoactive medications for persons with dementia.

### **4. Hospital care**

Patients with Alzheimer's disease experience health problems that often require hospitalization. This segment reviews several pitfalls encountered by primary care physicians when they transfer patients to the hospital for medical or surgical care.

### **5. End of Life**

Dementia is a fatal disease. This segment reviews basic principles of end of life care including the use of PEG tubes and advanced directives in caring for persons with dementia.