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## Gentle care for dementia: The homeopathic advantage

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### Abstract

Dementia is a progressive neurocognitive disorder marked by cognitive decline that interferes with independence. Common causes include Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, and Lewy body dementia. Management combines pharmacological therapy (cholinesterase inhibitors, memantine) with non-pharmacological approaches such as behavioral and reminiscence therapies. Complementary methods like art, music, and aromatherapy further support well-being. Homeopathy provides individualized care addressing memory loss, confusion, anxiety, and mood disturbances with remedies such as *Agnus castus*, *Alumina*, *Anacardium* and *Baryta carbonica*. This holistic approach aims to enhance quality of life, reduce caregiver stress, and complement conventional dementia management.

**Keywords:** Dementia, neurocognitive disorder, Alzheimer's disease, DSM-5 criteria, cognitive impairment, cholinesterase inhibitors, non-pharmacological therapy, behavioral interventions, complementary therapies, homeopathy, *Agnus castus*, *Baryta carbonica*, cognitive decline, quality of life, alternative medicine

### Introduction

Dementia refers to a disease process marked by progressive cognitive impairment in clear consciousness. It does not refer to low intellectual functioning or mental retardation, as these are developmental and static conditions. Instead, dementia represents a decline from a previous level of functioning and affects multiple cognitive domains, causing significant impairment in social and occupational functioning [1].

There are several types of dementia based on aetiology, including Alzheimer's disease, dementia with Lewy bodies, vascular dementia, frontotemporal dementia, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), HIV, prion disease, Parkinson's disease, and Huntington's disease [1].

Dementia prevalence doubles every five years after age 65. Among individuals 65 and older in high-income nations, prevalence ranges between 5-10%, with higher rates in women due to greater longevity. With increasing global life expectancy, low- and middle-income countries are expected to see the fastest rise in dementia cases, while prevalence in high-income countries may plateau [2].

According to DSM-5, the diagnosis of Major Neurocognitive Disorder (dementia) requires substantial impairment in one or more cognitive domains that interferes with independence in daily activities [3].

### Diagnostic criteria (DSM-5) [3]

- a) Evidence of significant cognitive decline in one or more domains (attention, executive function, learning and memory, language, perceptual-motor, or social cognition), based on:
  1. Concern from the patient, informant, or clinician.
  2. Substantial impairment documented by standardized testing or quantified clinical assessment.
- b) Deficits interfere with independence in everyday activities.
- c) Deficits are not exclusive to delirium.
- d) Deficits are not better explained by another mental disorder.

### Management

#### Pharmacological [4]

- Cholinesterase inhibitors (Donepezil, Rivastigmine, Galantamine) increase acetylcholine and help delay cognitive decline.

- Memantine (NMDA antagonist) postpones worsening of moderate to severe Alzheimer's disease.
- Common side effects: dizziness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea.

#### Non-pharmacological <sup>[5]</sup>

- **Behavioral therapy (ABC model):** Reduces problematic behaviors like wandering.
- **Reality orientation:** Uses memory aids for improved awareness.
- **Validation therapy:** Accepts patient's emotional reality to reduce distress.
- **Reminiscence therapy:** Enhances mood and interaction via past experiences.

#### Complementary & alternative therapies <sup>[5]</sup>

- **Art & music therapy:** Improves mood, memory, and social engagement.
- **Activity therapy:** Dance and exercise promote sleep and confidence.
- **Aromatherapy & massage:** Lavender, Melissa balm help relaxation.
- **Bright-light therapy & multisensory rooms:** Aid sleep and reduce agitation.

#### Short-term psychotherapies <sup>[5]</sup>

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** Reduces depression and anxiety.
- **Interpersonal therapy:** Addresses distress via life events and relationships.

#### Homeopathic management

Homeopathy treats dementia holistically by addressing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects without harmful side effects. Remedies are selected based on individual symptom profiles.

#### Commonly used remedies <sup>[6-9]</sup>

- **Agnus castus:** Anxiety, absentmindedness, memory loss, hallucinations.
- **Alumina:** Confusion about identity, poor concentration, fears of insanity.
- **Anacardium:** Severe mental weakness, hallucinations, indecisiveness.
- **Argentum nitricum:** Anxiety, tremors, speech hesitancy, mental dullness.
- **Baryta carbonica:** Severe memory loss, indecisiveness, senile dementia.
- **Calcarea carbonica:** Exhaustion, confusion, brain fatigue.
- **Conium maculatum:** Stupor, speech errors, poor memory.
- **Kali phosphoricum:** Mood swings, grief, delirium, weak memory.
- **Lac caninum:** Delusions, fears, hallucinations, weak memory.
- **Lycopodium:** Word-finding difficulty, confusion, incoherent speech.
- **Medorrhinum:** Poor memory, hallucinations, emotional instability.
- **Nux moschata:** Severe forgetfulness, disorientation, dream-like state.
- **Phosphoricum acidum:** Intellectual decline, memory loss, dullness.
- **Phosphorus:** Emotional weakness, memory loss, stupor, sensitivity.

- **Zincum metallicum:** Slow thought, poor memory, mental dullness.

#### Discussion

Conventional dementia management relies on cholinesterase inhibitors and NMDA antagonists, which provide only temporary relief and cause side effects. Non-pharmacological therapies offer psychosocial benefits but require intensive caregiver support.

Homeopathy stands out for its individualized, gentle, and holistic approach. Remedies address not only memory decline but also emotional and behavioral symptoms such as depression, anxiety, hallucinations, and irritability. Homeopathy is safe for elderly patients, can be integrated with conventional treatment, and reduces caregiver burden. Thus, homeopathy bridges therapeutic gaps, respects individuality, and enhances quality of life by addressing the person as a whole.

#### Conclusion

Dementia is a progressive neurocognitive disorder where conventional treatments remain largely palliative. Homeopathy offers a safe, individualized, and holistic approach, addressing both cognitive and emotional symptoms. By complementing modern medicine, it improves quality of life, reduces caregiver stress, and restores dignity to dementia patients.

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