

# Focus on: Dementia

## November is National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month

### QUICK FACTS

- Alzheimer's is regarded as the #1 public health challenge of the 21st century with more than 5 million Americans with the disease and about 11 million caregivers supporting them. Those numbers are estimated to triple by 2050.<sup>1</sup>
- Dementia is very common in the elderly population, afflicting 10% of individuals over the age of 65 and as many as 50% of individuals over the age of 85.<sup>2</sup>
- Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) is used to describe individuals with memory impairment with preserved cognitive function and intact activities of daily living. Among individuals with MCI, between 6% and 25% progress to dementia or Alzheimer's disease every year.<sup>2</sup>
- Alzheimer's disease, which accounts for 60% to 80% of dementia cases in the elderly, is believed to affect more than 4 million Americans.<sup>3</sup>



### DOCUMENTATION TIPS

- Document the type of dementia: senile, presenile or vascular (also any delirium, delusional or depressive features); alcohol-induced or drug-induced.
- Document any associated neurological condition, cerebral atherosclerosis, underlying physical condition or associated epilepsy (e.g. vascular dementia due to cerebral atherosclerosis).
- When documenting Alzheimer's disease or other cerebral degenerations, document any associated behavioral disturbance.

### Screening Recommendations

- The American Academy of Neurology (AAN) endorses screening for dementia when cognitive impairment is suspected.<sup>2</sup>
- Screening using tools such as the Mini Mental Status Exam (MMSE), adjusted for age and education, or other screening instruments are recommended.<sup>2</sup>
- There are reliable clinical criteria for Alzheimer's disease, such as DSM-IV Criteria for the Diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease.<sup>4</sup>

### Recommended For Routine Evaluation of the Demented Patient<sup>2</sup>

- CBC
- Glucose
- Thyroid function studies
- Electrolytes, BUN and creatinine
- Serum B12 levels
- Liver function testing
- Screening for depression
- Structural neuroimaging (non-contrast CT or MRI)<sup>3</sup>

### Coding Scenario #1:<sup>5</sup>

A patient is seen in the clinic with progressive memory loss and disorientation. The physician's diagnostic statement indicates progressive Alzheimer's disease.

331.0 Alzheimer's disease

### Coding Scenario #2:<sup>5</sup>

An elderly patient is seen for evaluation of violent behavior and episodes of wandering off. The physician documents Alzheimer's disease with dementia.

331.0 Alzheimer's disease

294.11 Dementia in conditions classified elsewhere with behavioral disturbance

### CODING HIGHLIGHTS<sup>6</sup>

- Dementia is coded as 294.8. Use additional code for associated epilepsy (**345.00-345.91**).
- Mild cognitive impairment is coded as 331.83.
- Alzheimer's dementia, Alzheimer's disease and Alzheimer's sclerosis are coded as 331.0. (Alzheimer's disease with dementia is coded as Alzheimer's dementia.)
- For codes in category 331, use an additional code to identify dementia with behavioral disturbance (294.11) or without behavioral disturbance (294.10).

<sup>1</sup> Reference: The Alzheimer's Association. "Hot Topics" from the Alzheimer's Association International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease 2010. Hot Topics. 15 July 2010. Web. 01 Oct. 2010. <[http://www.alz.org/icad/2010\\_release\\_hot\\_071410\\_1230pm.asp](http://www.alz.org/icad/2010_release_hot_071410_1230pm.asp)>.

<sup>2</sup> "Detection, Diagnosis and Management of Dementia." American Academy of Neurology. Web. 01 Aug. 2010. <[http://www.aan.com/professionals/practice/pdfs/dementia\\_guideline.pdf](http://www.aan.com/professionals/practice/pdfs/dementia_guideline.pdf)>.

<sup>3</sup> Shadlen, Marie-Florence, Larson, EB. "Evaluation of cognitive impairment and dementia." In: *UpToDate*, Basow, DS (Ed), UpToDate, Waltham, MA, 2009

<sup>4</sup> *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Medical Disorders*, Fourth Edition, Text Revision, Washington, D.C., American Psychiatric Association, 2000

<sup>5</sup> *2011 Coders' Desk Reference for Diagnosis*. Alexandria, VA: Ingenix, 2010. 323. Print.

<sup>6</sup> World Health Organization, *Professional: ICD-9-CM for Physicians—Volumes 1 & 2*. 2011. Alexandria, VA: Ingenix, 2010, October. Print.