ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE WITH FICTITIOUS RESULTS

Care Plan Services Report

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01 HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

Like physical fitness, people's cognitive status varies with age and other factors. And, while it is true that as the years go by both the body and cognition may not be at their brightest, aging does not imply having a malfunction of either. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that dementia or cognitive impairment do not have to appear during the natural development of a healthy life.

The scientific literature makes it clear that there are certain factors that can greatly reduce the likelihood of suffering dementia or severe cognitive impairment. The five most relevant pillars to prevent these problems are: physical exercise, a healthy balanced diet, cognitive stimulation, socialization, and adequate rest. The following sections will describe these aspects and others that are also relevant to cognitive health.

A lifestyle that adequately applies a set of good habits can help promote independence and reduce the impact or rate of progression of cognitive impairment on a person's life.

1.1 General health

The five pillars mentioned above are essential for good cognitive health, but we must not lose sight of the fact that general health must also be taken care of, even more carefully, when it comes to people with any type of cognitive impairment. Not only may they find it more difficult to adjust to treatment, but they may also have difficulty identifying in themselves certain health problems, discomforts, and other types of problems that would be easy to identify in healthy people. For this reason it is important that people with cognitive impairment live with or are cared for by people who can be attentive to the possible signs and symptoms that may appear. Just as important as the detection of these symptoms is that family members, caregivers or persons assisting the person in question attend medical, psychological, psychiatric, etc. visits to ensure that the information is properly transmitted to the corresponding professional.

Additionally, people with cognitive impairment can also make use of a wide variety of resources and support systems, such as support groups, educational materials, and assistance with daily activities, to help them manage their condition and maintain their overall health and wellbeing. Education and training of caregivers, family and loved ones about cognitive impairment is essential to ensure the best support for both the person with cognitive impairment and those who will be providing assistance.

Education of the affected person may also be a very important aspect to address. Although the recommendation may vary from case to case, depending especially on the person's overall cognitive functioning, making people with cognitive impairment aware of their problems can be of great help in managing their expectations and difficulties that may arise. But this should not make us lose sight of the emotional and behavioral impact this may have on affected individuals: they may suffer intense emotional distress or feelings of stigma associated with their condition. This issue should be treated with sensitivity and compassion; seeking help from a professional if help or advice is required.

By taking these steps and addressing both cognitive and general health, we can help improve the quality of life for individuals with cognitive impairment and reduce the impact of their condition on their daily lives.

However, it is important to consult with a healthcare provider for personalized advice on general health in cognitive decline..

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1.2 Lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle includes a series of routines and habits that require minimal effort, but greatly help to preserve as much as possible the cognitive status during old age, or even in the face of dementia.

As detailed below, these routines and habits may include regular exercise, a healthy diet, getting enough sleep and exposure to sunlight. However, those are not the only healthy habits that can be adopted: avoiding risky behaviors such as excessive alcohol consumption or using other substances can also be beneficial. By incorporating these habits into daily life, individuals can help support their cognitive health and potentially reduce their risk of developing cognitive decline or dementia; or even reduce the impact of cognitive impairment in their lives.

Remember that it is important to consult with a healthcare provider for personalized advice on maintaining cognitive health and preventing cognitive decline.

At the level of routines, the main examples would be the following:

1.2.1 Physical Exercise

Physical exercise has been shown to have numerous benefits for cognitive health, including improved memory and thinking skills, increased brain volume, and reduced risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Regular exercise can also help to improve overall physical health, which in turn can support cognitive health.

Physical exercise should be moderate and adapted to our possibilities. It is not a matter of running a marathon or lifting the heaviest weights: the important thing is to identify which physical exercise is suitable for our condition and dedicate the necessary time and effort to it. Aerobic cardiovascular exercise, such as walking, running, swimming, cycling, etc. are good examples of physical activity that we can do at different intensities to promote our physical and cerebral health.

Mixing aerobic and strength-training activities to our exercise routine could be a great way to design a complete physical training. Strength-training exercises, such as lifting weights or doing bodyweight exercises, can help to maintain muscle mass and strength, which can be important for maintaining overall health and independence as we age.

General recommendations usually propose at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week, or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, along with at least two days of strength-training activities. However, these recommendations should be adjusted to our possibilities.

It is also important to consult with a healthcare provider before starting any new exercise routine, particularly if you have any existing health conditions.

1.2.2 Diet

A healthy and varied diet provides the necessary nutrients for our body and brain, and helps reduce the risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Of course, it is not only a matter of applying an adequate amount of nutrients, but it is also important to provide varied and good quality nutrients so that our body can take full advantage of them and have the best possible "fuel". The Mediterranean diet, which is high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, and healthy fats, has been shown to have numerous benefits for cognitive health. This diet emphasizes plant-based foods, limits processed and refined foods, and includes moderate amounts of dairy products, poultry, and eggs.

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To incorporate a healthy diet into a routine for improving cognitive health, it is recommended to focus on whole, unprocessed foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. It is also important to limit consumption of processed and refined foods, as well as foods high in saturated and trans fats, salt, and added sugars. It is recommended to eat a variety of nutrient-dense foods and to avoid skipping meals.

It is also important to consult with a healthcare provider or registered dietitian for personalized advice on maintaining a healthy diet for cognitive health.

1.2.3 Cognitive stimulation

Learning, keeping the brain busy and cognitive stimulation in general allows our brain to face new challenges and remain active. The brain consumes a lot of resources and, if we do not demand effort from it, it tends to save those resources, making us less efficient. Learning languages, learning to play instruments, taking up a new hobby, attending educational classes or cognitive stimulation are good ways to help the brain stay in good shape. You can try the CogniFit training on your PC, or on the App for iOS and Android. (https://www.cognifit.com)

These new learnings generate "cognitive reserve", which can provide a buffer against the effects of age-related changes and the development of dementia. This means that individuals who have engaged in more mentally stimulating activities throughout their lives may be better able to maintain their cognitive function as they age, compared to individuals who have not had as much mental stimulation.

It is important to consult with a healthcare provider for personalized advice on incorporating learning and mentally stimulating activities into a routine for maintaining cognitive health.

1.2.4 Socialize

Human beings are social animals, and need to interact with other people. Socialization allows us to organically put into practice small challenges for the brain, strengthening prospective memory, naming, etc. In addition, it is a perfect context to work on emotions and social skills.

Good social support can help to reduce stress, improve mental health, and provide a sense of belonging and connection. Chronic stress has been linked to an increased risk of cognitive decline and dementia, and social support can help to mitigate the negative effects of stress on the brain. Additionally, staying socially connected and engaging in social activities can provide mental stimulation, which can also support cognitive health.

It is important to consult with a healthcare provider for personalized advice on incorporating social activities into a routine for maintaining cognitive health.

1.2.5 Sleep

Sleep plays a fundamental role in the rest and recovery of mind and body, so it is necessary to acquire a good sleep routine, making sure we sleep the necessary time. Good sleep hygiene involves, for example:

- Sleeping an appropriate number of hours. The amount of sleep needed for proper brain development and maintenance will vary with age. However, for a healthy adult, an average of 7-8 hours of sleep per day is usually recommended.
- Sticking to a consistent sleep schedule. Going to bed and waking up at the same time each day can help regulate your body's internal clock and improve the quality of your sleep.

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- Creating a relaxing bedtime routine. Doing activities that help you unwind, such as taking a warm bath or listening to calming music, can make it easier for you to fall asleep at night.
- Making your sleep environment conducive to sleep. Your bedroom should be cool, dark, and quiet, and your bed should be comfortable.
- Avoiding heavy meals, caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine before bedtime. These substances can interfere with your ability to fall asleep and stay asleep.
- Exercising regularly. Regular physical activity can help you fall asleep faster and sleep more soundly. Just be sure to finish your workout at least a few hours before bedtime.
- Avoiding looking at screens before bedtime. The blue light emitted by screens can interfere with your body's production of melatonin, a hormone that helps regulate your sleep-wake cycle.
- Consider trying relaxation techniques. Techniques like deep breathing, meditation, or progressive muscle relaxation can help calm your mind and body and prepare you for sleep. You can try the CogniFit Meditation App for iOS and Android

It is important to consult with a healthcare provider for personalized advice on maintaining a good sleep routine for cognitive health.

1.2.6 Behavior and emotions

The behavioral and emotional aspects have a clear impact on cognition. Perhaps the clearest cases associated with cognitive impairment are anxiety and depressive disorders. Of course, they can appear independently of cognitive impairment, but it is often during the progression of a disorder, even at the beginning of it, where such disorders appear and make the situation even more difficult. Although they are the most common, anxiety and depression are not the only disorders of this type that can appear. That is why it is important to be attentive to any behavioral or emotional signs that may appear, since it can be complicated to identify them even for the person who suffers from them. However, intervening on these problems in time can help to reach a solution as soon as possible.

Other psychosocial factors, such as social support and stress management, can also play a role in maintaining cognitive health and reducing the risk of cognitive decline and dementia, or its impact in daily life. Social support can help to reduce stress, improve mental health, and provide a sense of belonging and connection. Stress management techniques, such as meditation, deep breathing, or exercise, can help to reduce the negative effects of stress on the brain. You can try the CogniFit training on your PC, or on the App for iOS and Android. (https://www.cognifit.com) .

To incorporate psychosocial factors into a routine for improving cognitive health, it is recommended to regularly engage in activities that provide social support and stress management. This may include spending time with friends and family, participating in group activities, or sharing hobbies with other people. It is also important to practice stress management techniques on a regular basis, and to seek support from friends, family, or a healthcare provider if needed.

It is important to consult with a healthcare provider for personalized advice on incorporating psychosocial factors into a routine for improving cognitive health.

1.2.7 Sensory

As is the case with the body and cognition, the sensitivity of the perceptual organs often declines with age. However, severe difficulties with vision, hearing, or other senses are not an inevitable consequence of aging. In the case of people with cognitive problems, such as dementia, they often have the added difficulty that the parts of the brain responsible for perception may also be affected, so it is important to check that they have their senses in good condition.

Sensory care involves providing support and interventions to help individuals maintain and enhance their sensory abilities, and to reduce the negative effects of sensory changes on their quality of life. Sensory care may include activities and interventions such as providing appropriate lighting and sound levels, offering a variety of textures and smells to stimulate the senses, and using music and other sensory-rich experiences to provide comfort and enjoyment. It may also involve using assistive devices, such as glasses or hearing aids, to improve sensory function, and providing support for individuals who may be experiencing sensory overload or difficulty processing sensory information.

It is important to consult with a healthcare provider or trained professional for personalized advice on incorporating sensory care into a care plan.

1.2.8 Sunlight

Although it is not the first protective factor that may come to mind when talking about cognitive health, sunlight plays an important role in vitamin D synthesis, which is important for maintaining healthy bones and supporting the immune system. Vitamin D deficiency has been linked to an increased risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Actually, sunlight exposure has been shown to have several benefits for cognitive health, including improved mood, increased alertness, and better sleep. The lack of sunlight can be associated with emotional problems, such as the Stational Affective Disorder (SAD).

To incorporate sunlight exposure into a routine, it is recommended to spend at least 15 minutes in the sun each day by, for example, taking a walk outdoors, sitting in the sun, or engaging in outdoor activities. The time of day and the season when trying to get sunlight exposure will vary the way the sun affects our skin. Although being exposed to the sun without wearing sunscreen can slightly facilitate vitamin D synthesis, it is important to avoid getting sunburned, and to use sunscreen if you will be spending extended periods of time in the sun. Delicate skins may require additional care, so always take this into account and provide the necessary care.

It is important to consult with a healthcare provider for personalized advice on incorporating sunlight exposure into a routine for improving cognitive health.

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02
ADAPTATIONS AND OTHER APPROACHES

2.1 Activities in Daily Living (ADL) preservation

When cognitive impairment is identified in an individual, it is very likely that behavioral changes will need to be considered and implemented for both the person with cognitive impairment and the caregivers. People with cognitive problems often have reduced independence due to limitations in activities of daily living. Activities of daily living (ADL) are the basic tasks and activities that individuals need to perform on a daily basis in order to maintain their independence and wellbeing. Basic activities such as dressing, eating, grooming, getting around, or caring for oneself may be unfeasible for people with cognitive limitations. Dealing with these activities will sometimes require more time, additional tools, adaptations in processes, or help from another person. The important thing is to ensure that these people have their needs met and that they have access to at least the essentials.

There are many ways to support individuals with dementia in performing ADL, including the following:

- Create a routine and schedule for ADL, and provide reminders and prompts to help the individual remember what to do.
- Break down tasks into smaller steps and provide clear instructions.
- Use visual cues, such as labels or pictures, to help the individual remember what to do.
- Provide physical assistance as needed, but also encourage the individual to do as much as they can on their own.
- Using memory aids such as calendars, lists, alarms, and reminders to help with memory and organization.
- Use assistive devices, such as grab bars or adaptive utensils, to make ADL easier and safer.

It is important to consult with a healthcare provider for personalized advice on supporting ADL for individuals with dementia.

2.2 Communication

Communication is essential for people's autonomy, as it allows them to convey their needs, preferences and necessities. It is a complex process at a cognitive level that requires perceptual processes, information comprehension, information processing, response production, for which a complex range of cognitive processes are required, such as attention, perception, memory, language, executive functions and coordination. To facilitate communication with people with cognitive problems we can:

- Practice active listening, which involves paying full attention to the person speaking, avoiding interruptions, and providing feedback to show that you understand what they are saying.
- Use clear and concise language, avoiding complex words that may not be understood by the listener.
- Be open and honest in your communication. Try to avoid making assumptions or jumping to conclusions.
- Be aware of nonverbal communication, such as body language and tone of voice. Try to use these to reinforce the message you are trying to convey.
- Be willing to listen to feedback and adjust your communication style if necessary.
- Take the time to understand the perspective of the other person, and try to see things from their point of view.
- Be respectful and considerate in your communication, and avoid using aggressive or confrontational language.

Overall, the key to improving communication is to be open, honest, and attentive to the needs of the person you are communicating with.

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2.3 Management

The management of the most complex aspects of daily life, such as financial management, legal management, etc., can be complex even for healthy people, as it requires specific knowledge, mental clarity, planning, problem-solving, and other executive functions. People with cognitive impairments may find it very difficult to perform these types of activities, often requiring help to carry them out, or even being unable to carry out these processes. It is important to identify such difficulties as they arise and, if possible, to talk with the affected person to see how he or she wishes to proceed.

To support the individual with cognitive impairment, caregivers can carry out a series of actions that favor the individual's independence:

- Assist with managing bills and paying expenses, such as setting up automatic payments or helping the individual write checks.
- Help the individual to make decisions about financial and legal matters, such as discussing options and providing guidance, but also respecting the individual's autonomy and decision-making abilities.
- Monitor the individual's financial and legal affairs for potential risks or issues, such as fraudulent activity or changes in the individual's financial or legal status.
- Organize and keep track of the individual's financial and legal documents, such as bank statements, tax records, and legal documents such as a will or power of attorney.
- Consider appointing a power of attorney or guardian to manage the individual's financial and legal affairs, if necessary.

It is important to consult with a healthcare provider or legal professional for personalized advice on managing financial and legal affairs for individuals with dementia.

2.4 Safety environment

One of the main problems that people with cognitive impairment may have is anosognosia, that is, the inability to identify their deficits. For this reason, it is not uncommon for a person with serious perceptual, motor, memory, or planning problems to try to act as he or she did during the time he or she was healthy, even attempting activities as every day as dangerous: driving, cooking, handling utensils, going outside or climbing stairs. For this reason, it is important to identify any potential hazards and adapt the home or environment of people with cognitive impairment to ensure their safety and well-being, and avoid accidents or injuries.

To support the individual with cognitive impairment, caregivers can carry out a series of actions that favor the individual's independence:

- Install safety devices, such as grab bars, handrails, or non-slip flooring, to prevent falls and other accidents.
- Remove potential hazards, such as tripping or slipping hazards, sharp objects, and medications or chemicals that could be harmful if ingested.
- Provide clear and easy-to-follow instructions for tasks and activities, and use visual cues, such as labels or pictures, to help the individual remember what to do.
- Use alarms or other alert systems to notify caregivers if the individual is at risk of wandering or leaving the house unsupervised.
- Keep emergency contact information and a list of medications readily available in case of an emergency.

It is important to consult with a healthcare provider for personalized advice on creating a safe environment for individuals with dementia.

03 CAREGIVER SUPPORT

When we help a person with cognitive and/or physical problems, we often forget to take care of ourselves: but just as important as taking care of the person who needs help is taking care of the caregiver. For this reason, we must be aware of the signs and symptoms we may show. The most common problems in caregivers are burnout, anxiety, and depression. In these cases, we must consult a professional to identify the best way to solve this problem without neglecting the dependent person.

Caring for a person with dementia can be physically and emotionally challenging, and caregivers may experience a range of emotions, such as feelings of isolation. It is important for caregivers to have access to support and resources to help them manage the challenges of caregiving and maintain their health and well-being.

There are several types of support that caregivers may find helpful, including the following

- Emotional support, such as counseling or support groups, to help caregivers manage their emotions and cope with the challenges of caregiving.
- Practical support, such as respite care or home care services, to provide temporary relief from caregiving duties and help with tasks such as bathing, dressing, and managing medications.
- Educational support, such as workshops or classes, to provide caregivers with information and resources to help them understand and manage dementia.
- Financial support, such as financial assistance or grants, to help caregivers cover the costs of caregiving and other expenses.

It is important to consult with a healthcare provider or trained professional for personalized advice on accessing caregiver support.

04 COMMENTS

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05 RESOURCES

External information about general health:

- Health.gov | https://health.gov/
- USA.gov | https://www.usa.gov/health

External information about lifestyle:

- https://www.hhs.gov/programs/prevention-and-wellness/healthy-lifestyle/index.html
- Study | "https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4703222/

External information about physical exercise:

- https://www.nutrition.gov/topics/exercise-and-fitness
- https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/index.htm

External information about diet:

- https://health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/dietary-guidelines
- https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diet-nutrition

External information about cognitive stimulation:

- Study | https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22336813/
- Study | https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1586/14737175.8.5.751

External information about social wellness:

- https://www.nih.gov/health-information/social-wellness-toolkit
- Study | https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30209428/

External information about sleep:

- https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/index.html
- https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/public-education/brain-basics/brain-basics-understanding-sleep

External information about behavior and emotions:

- https://www.nih.gov/health-information/emotional-wellness-toolkit
- https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/personal-social-and-emotional-development/emotions

External information about caregiver support:

- https://www.usa.gov/disability-caregiver
- https://acl.gov/programs/support-caregivers/national-family-caregiver-support-program

External information about other relevant topics:

- https://health.gov/healthypeople/about/workgroups/hearing-and-other-sensory-or-communication-disorders-workgroup
- https://health.gov/our-work/national-health-initiatives/health-literacy