

Depression and dementia go hand in hand

Katie Miloch is no stranger to dementia and depression. She deals with both in her job as a social worker for Wood County. But when she began researching the relationship between them, it cast a new light.

"It was kind of surprising to me with how closely (dementia is) related to depression," she said.

Miloch, the lead services coordinator for Wood County Human Services, was the guest speaker at the March meeting of the Alzheimer's caregiver support group.

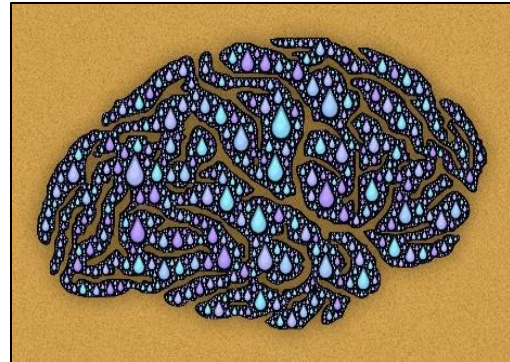
"People with Alzheimer's disease are up to 57 percent more likely to have depression than people without Alzheimer's," she said. "It's amazing that half of these people (with Alzheimer's) also have a depression diagnosis."

It's not just people with dementia who have depression, though. People diagnosed with depression actually develop dementia at two-and-a-half to six times the rate of the general population, Miloch reported.

Depression symptoms mimic many symptoms of dementia, which might make it difficult to recognize. Those symptoms might include a lack of interest in hobbies or pastimes, poor sleep, change in appetite, unsubstantiated GI complaints, fatigue or low energy, guilt, agitation, anger, confusion and slowed thought process and movement.

These symptoms are the same for both the person with dementia and the caregiver. Again, caring for someone with dementia might naturally cause some of these symptoms, making it more difficult to recognize depression.

In each case, for the person with dementia or the caregiver, talk to your doctor about your concerns. "Depression and anxiety are some of the most treatable and most common mental health conditions," Miloch said.



Medication can make a difference for people with and without dementia, but it might take up to three months to see changes in the person with dementia, while it might only take four to six weeks for a person without dementia.

Some approaches for people with dementia and depression include: support groups; counseling; set a predictable daily routine; make a list of activities, people or places the person enjoys and schedule these things more frequently; exercise often, especially in the morning; acknowledge a person's sadness or frustration; celebrate small successes; find ways the person can contribute in his or her social life; provide reassurance that the person is loved, respected and appreciated; and reassure the person he or she will not be abandoned.

For caregivers, she suggests asking family and friends to help, using community resources such as the Aging & Disability Resource Center, in-home assistance, respite care and support, and managing stress.

"We need to treat them as a whole – not just that initial diagnosis," Miloch said.

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Learn to love your joints!

You don't have to live with joint pain! There are treatment options available locally. Kathleen Schultz, RN, is the Joint Center coordinator at Aspirus Riverview Hospital. She talked about joint health and arthritis treatment options during the March Let's Learn Together session.



You can watch Let's Learn Together on Wisconsin Rapids Community Media at 9 a.m. Mondays and 11 a.m. Wednesdays on Solarus Ch. 3 or Charter Ch. 985.

All of the presentations are free and open to the public. They are designed to help everyone learn more about a variety of topics.

Upcoming sessions include:

✦ Ila Jean Babcock has been practicing yoga for 20+ years and teaching for 10. "I became interested in meditation through my yoga practice. Many people think that to meditate you must still the mind and remove all thoughts. This type of meditation is only one aspect of the practice. Meditation is really just a deeply listening to what is going on in your mind and body, and there are many different ways/styles of doing that. Come join me and let me help you find a meditative practice that suits you – anyone can do it." She will present on meditation and progressive relaxation techniques at 7 p.m. Thursday, April 13.

✦ Is your home FAT (Full of Acquired Things)? Learn how to use a Space Diet to your advantage with Annette Krautkramer of Caring Transitions 10 a.m. Thursday, May 4.

✦ Daly Drug owner and pharmacist Jason Gruszynski has developed an at-home medication management system that will help you or your loved one stay on track with medications, doctors' orders and more. Learn how to manage your medications at home easily and safely at 10 a.m. Thursday, June 15

Future events include: chronic pain and rehabilitation, elder law, financial planning, power of attorney for health care and long-term care insurance.

All programs will be held at Hilltop Grand Village, 1400 24th St. S. Enter by Home Depot. With questions, call Mystique at 715-423-7400 or email mystique@hilltopgrandvillage.com.

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Suicide in seniors

Depression untreated could lead to suicide. Miloch also works with people experiencing suicidal thoughts through Crisis Intervention. She noted that older people make up 12 percent of the population but 18 percent of completed suicides. That number doesn't count "silent suicides," including overdoses, self-starving, dehydration and accidents that are questionable in nature but can't be specifically labeled as suicide, she said.

Warning signs of suicide are a decrease in interests, decrease in self-care and grooming (but not because the person is not able to do it but chooses not to), no longer taking medications or following specialized diets, experiencing or expecting a personal loss, lack of concern with personal safety, putting personal affairs in order and giving away personal possessions.

Miloch suggest ensuring firearms are properly stored, reducing sedative use and educating physicians about late life depression. "Research shows that 70 percent of elderly who completed suicide had seen their primary care physician with the last month," she reported. Most had no psychiatric disorders diagnosed or sought mental health treatment.

Miloch encourages caregivers, family and friends to watch for warning signs, ask questions, persuade the person to get help and refer him or her to services. If you're in doubt or unsure, you can call the Mental Health Crisis Line at 715-421-2345 anytime, day or night, to talk to a professional.



Hilltop again will have a team in the Walk to End Alzheimer's.

This year's walk will be Saturday, Sept. 23 in Stevens Point. We encourage you to join us on the team. If you can't walk, please consider a donation to the Alzheimer's Association on our team's behalf. If you can't donate, please tell someone about the walk. You can find team details here:

<http://act.alz.org/goto/Hilltop>

We will be promoting the walk on social media (Facebook and Twitter). Be sure to follow us and to share news about the walk. We'd love to have a team of walkers representing Hilltop and walking on behalf of our residents and their family members this year!

Happy Birthday!

The following residents celebrate birthdays in April:

- Minnette, April 3
- Bev, April 5
- Carmen, April 18



A senior singalong group from Lowell Center entertains at the March memory café.

Support group helps answer questions

Do you have questions about Alzheimer's or other dementia? Are you a caregiver who wants to learn more or isn't sure where to turn for help? The Alzheimer's caregiver support group can help provide answers.

Join us at the next meeting at 9:30 a.m. April 13 at the Brehm Conference Room in the Centralia Center.

We offer refreshments and a time for sharing. Anyone who cares for someone with Alzheimer's or dementia or anyone wishing to learn more is welcome to attend. There is no cost and no obligation.

If you need respite care for your loved one so you can attend, call Hilltop at 715-423-7400 to arrange free care during the meeting.

Memory cafe in Rapids

Memory cafes are for people with early stage dementia, mild memory loss or cognitive impairment and for family and friends of those affected.

Expect this to be a fun affair with good coffee, good snacks, good conversations and a good recapturing of memories we hold dear!

This memory café is held from 10:30 a.m. to noon the second Tuesday of every month at Centralia Center. The next one will be April 11.

For more information, call Park Place Adult Day Services at 715-422-2795.

Getting active at Hilltop Grand Village

We have been busy at Hilltop Grand Village since it opened late last year. Our residents are finding new things to keep them active socially, mentally and physically.



Tea time is a favorite among the ladies at Hilltop. Penny, one of our caregiving staff members, brings vintage hats, dresses and decorations to dress up the Bistro for weekly tea.



Leo, an English cream golden retriever, is a member favorite when he visits (clockwise from top left). Julie Elzinga teaches stamping techniques each month. Members gather in the pub for St. Patrick's Day for happy hour, with green beer. Chef Rick shows how to hula during a pool party.