NATIONAL REGISTER
OF HEALTH SERVICE PSYCHOLOGISTS
Cognitive Impairment

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Cognitive Impairment

- **2.5-5.5 million in US** have dementia
- PCPs miss as much as **76% of dementia**
  - May look and act healthy in routine encounters
  - Patients may be unaware of extent or impact of deficits
- **10-15% of older PC patients** have mild CI
  - Not severe enough to impair functioning
  - Higher risk for dementia
USPSTF Guidance

- **Insufficient evidence for/against screening**
  - Brief instruments *can* detect dementia
  - *But* no clear benefit of early detection
    - Unclear benefit of medication treatments
    - Unclear benefit of other (exercise, cognitive stimulation)
    - Unclear benefit of caregiver interventions
    - Unclear benefit on decision-making of pts, family, PCP
  - *And* concerns exist
    - Adverse effects of meds
    - Effects of false positive screens
So, What to Do?

- **Pressure may exist to screen**
  - Families, sometimes patients
  - Medicare Annual Wellness Exam

- **Consider stepped approach** *
  - Review of patient health risk assessment information
  - Patient observation
  - Use of unstructured queries
  - Use of structured cognitive assessment tools

* Alzheimer’s Association Guidelines for Assessment
Cognitive Assessment Tools

• Mini-Mental Status Exam (MMSE)
  • Best studied – but long, and no longer free
• Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA)
  • Also long – may detect change better over short time
• Clock Drawing Test (CDT)
• Mini-Cog
  • 3-item recall, Clock Drawing Test
• Memory Impairment Screen (MIS)
  • 4 words: read, give category cue, recall
Treatments

- **Medication**
  - Acetylcholinesterase inhibitors
  - May slow cognitive and functional decline slightly
  - But unclear clinical significance

- **Caregiver-focused interventions**
  - Goal of improved caregiver skills, or caregiver support
  - Slight improvement, but unclear clinical significance

- **Cognitive training**
  - Some promising results, but poor quality research

- **Exercise**
  - No clear benefit on cognitive function or depression
Other Interventions

- Family Support
- Assistance with home placement
- Initiate advanced planning as soon as possible
- Medications for symptom management (e.g., agitation, sleep)

*The absence of data does not suggest an absence of action*
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