Overhead/Handout 9.3. Symptoms of Depression in People with Dementia

The presence of any symptom that is not easily altered by attempts to cheer up, console, or reassure and that lasts at least two weeks may signal depression.

- Negative statements ("Nothing matters"; "I'd rather be dead"; "What's the use?"; "Let me die")
- Repeats the same question over and over ("Where do I go?"; "What do I do?")
- Repetitive statements calling out for help ("God help me")
- Persistent anger with self or others; easily annoyed (anger at placement, anger at care received, anger at caregiver)
- Self-deprecation ("I am nothing"; "I am of no use to anyone")
- Expressions of what appear to be unrealistic fears (fear of being abandoned, left alone, being with others)
- Recurrent statements that something terrible is about to happen (believes he is about to die or to have a heart attack)
- Repetitive health complaints (persistently seeks medical attention, obsessive concern with body functions)
- Repetitive anxious complaints/concerns not related to health (persistently seeks attention/reassurance regarding schedules, meals, laundry/clothing, relationship issues)
- Unpleasant mood in morning
- Insomnia/change in usual sleep pattern
- Sad, pained, worried expression (e.g., furrowed brows)
- Crying, tearfulness
- Repetitive physical movements (e.g., pacing, hand wringing, restlessness, fidgeting, picking)
- Withdrawal from activities of interest (e.g., no interest in longstanding activities or being with family/friends)
- Reduced social interaction
- Persistent anger with self or others

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