

January 29, 2021

Families, friends, residents and staff,



On Tuesday we conducted our weekly PCR testing which confirmed the positive residents identified during the rapid antigen tests, a staff member was also confirmed positive. Residents and staff were tested again today using the rapid antigen test and no new positive cases were identified. The negative test results are a positive beacon of light and we are all hopeful and praying we maintain this trajectory. We require two weeks of no additional positive COVID cases before DHHS will consider clearing our facility from an outbreak status; we are hopeful to be three days into this timeline.

As residents tested positive for COVID we moved each positive resident into the designated COVID unit. This allowed us to segregate positive residents from negative residents but has created an incredibly challenging situation for residents to return their rooms. Before anyone is moved we are ensuring they are no longer showing symptoms of COVID. Individuals who originally resided on third floor have successfully returned to their rooms when leaving the COVID unit. Residents are delighted to return to their original rooms which is also a signal to the return to normalcy, even if "COVID normal." Although it is important for residents to return to their homes it is equally vital we do not rush these returns which may continue spreading COVID.

The change of the calendar year also saw a change in funding for weekly surveillance and outbreak testing. We were provided a transition period to work through the new requirements and we will be sending our COVID tests to New Hampshire's Public Health Lab beginning with next Tuesday's PCR test. Other homes within Catholic Charities have experienced a turnaround time similar to what we have with our previous lab. We will also continue to have the ability to review results online, this is significantly quicker than labs which fax results.

Again, as residents continue to leave the COVID unit we are able to transition back to the services we are accustomed to. This has been a challenging time for families, residents and staff and would like to thank each of you for your advocacy, understanding and dedication. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions related to memory care or any other areas of concern.

Kim Reardon, Memory Care Manager, began a monthly letter which is included in today's update.

Thank you,

Jeffrey Lacroix

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Stages of Dementia

Family members often ask “What stage of Dementia is my loved one in?” or “How long will they be in the stage they are in now?” There are no easy answers to these questions except, how quickly dementia progresses depends on the individual. Several factors including what type of dementia your loved one has, their physical make-up, and their emotional resilience among others figure into the progression. Each person is unique and experience dementia in their own way.

Viewing dementia as a series of stages can be a useful way to understand the illness, but it is also important to realize that this only provides a rough guide to the progression of the disease. No matter what type of grouping (and there are several) are used to stage the disease the easiest way to describe them are: The Early/Mild Stage, The Middle/Moderate Stage and The Late/Severe Stage. Here is a guide to each stage but please be mindful that it is only a guide as your loved one’s progression may be slightly different.

The Early or Mild Stage

In the early stage of dementia your loved one may function independently. This stage can often last 2-4 years. They may still drive, work and be part of social activities. Despite this, they may feel as if they are having memory issues, such as forgetting familiar words or the location of everyday objects.

Symptoms may not be widely noticeable at this stage, but family and close friends may notice them. Often, they will try to hide their symptoms from other people.

Common difficulties in this stage include

Coming up with the right word or name, remembering names when introduced to new people, having difficulty performing tasks in social or work setting, forgetting material that was just read, losing or misplacing objects, have trouble with planning or organizing.

The Middle or Moderate Stage

The middle stage is typically the longest stage and can last for many years. The individual is no longer able to hide their symptoms from loved ones. As the disease progresses, you will notice that your loved one will require a greater level of care. Due to the longevity of this stage you will see the most changes in your loved one during the Moderate Stage.

During this stage, dementia symptoms are more pronounced. Your loved one may confuse words, get frustrated or angry, and act in unexpected ways, such as refusing to bathe. Damage to nerve cells in the brain can also make it difficult for the person to express thoughts and perform routine tasks without help.

Common difficulties in this stage include

Being forgetful of events or personal history. Personality or mood changes also often occur especially in socially or mentally challenging situations. Forgetting things like their address or telephone number, confused about the time of day or requiring assistance to choose the proper clothing for the season are all common side effects of the moderate stage. Having trouble with toileting needs, experiencing changes in sleep patterns they may sleep during the day and be up all night, and they may wander. The moderate stage is also when most personality and behavioral transitions occur; these often include suspiciousness and delusions repetitive behaviors. It is important to note that in the moderate stage, the individual one can still participate in daily activities with assistance but often require these tasks to be simplified.

The Late Stage or Severe Stage

In the late stage of the disease, dementia symptoms become increasingly more severe. This stage usually lasts 1-3 years. The individual will lose their ability to respond to their environment, to carry on a conversation and eventually, unable to control movement. They may still say words or phrases but communication becomes difficult. As memory and cognitive skills continue to worsen, significant personality changes may take place and individuals require extensive care.

Common difficulties in this stage include

During the late stage individuals will lose awareness of recent experiences as well as of their surroundings. In addition to difficulty in communicating, individuals will experience changes in physical abilities such as walking, sitting, staying awake and swallowing.

Your loved one may be unable to initiate engagement during this stage but they can still benefit from interactions. Late stage interactions include listening to relaxing music or receiving reassurance through gentle touch. During the late stage individuals with Dementia still continue to feel emotion. Even if your loved one is unable to speak or they are having difficulty staying awake they are still able to feel your love.

I sincerely hope this guide is helpful to you as a family member. Understanding the stages of Dementia can be a useful way to recognize the progression of their disease.

Thank you,

Kim Reardon