

A Matter of Agency

FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF NURSING RESEARCH

Can Predementia Personality Predict Wandering?

Evidence of a link is growing.

When a person suffers from dementia there's always a possibility that she or he will wander away from home or a care facility, an event that can have grave consequences. In a recent study of Mid-western long-term care facilities (nursing homes and assisted living facilities), researchers sought to discover whether relationships exist between the personality and behavior of patients before they develop dementia and their risk of wandering.

A random cluster sample of 108 nursing home residents and family member dyads was selected from a larger study being conducted at 28 sites. The strongest predictors of wandering were a higher degree of dementia and older age, which both significantly predicted less wandering behavior. After controlling for both age and degree of dementia, however, two pre-morbid characteristics, lower extroversion scores on an assessment of "past personality traits" and "negative ver-

balization" in response to stress, significantly predicted greater wandering behavior.

Although many people deal with stress by talking to others or keeping busy, dementia patients who had less extroverted personalities before they developed dementia may not opt for either. Rather, they may look for a private, secure place where they can be alone and to relieve stress in other ways. Finding such a place, however, may be difficult for them, given their current cognitive state, which could lead to wandering.

These results lend support to the view that wandering in persons with dementia can be an adaptive behavior reflecting premorbid personality traits and lifelong patterns of coping with stress. The findings of this study may help caregivers to plan and provide more effective individualized care for each person.

Song J-A, Algase D. *Arch Psychiatr Nurs* 2008;22(6):318-27.

NEW FROM THE CDC

Unintentional Injuries Among Children

Unintentional injuries are the leading cause of morbidity and mortality among children in the United States. Each year, more than 12,000 U.S. children (ranging in age from birth to 19 years) die from an unintentional injury. Every day, about 20 children die from a preventable injury. And unintentional injury is the cause of an estimated 9.2 million initial ED visits by children annually. A new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides an overview of patterns of unintentional injuries in this age group from 2000 to 2006; injuries covered include drowning, falls, burns and injuries from fires, transportation-related injuries, poisoning, and suffocation, among others. Findings are presented by sex, age group, and geographic area. The CDC hopes that the report, which is available at www.cdc.gov/safefchild/Child_Injury_Data.htm, will help nurses and other health care professionals better understand the problem and take needed steps to help prevent injuries in children.

Nurses can direct parents to the CDC's Protect the Ones You Love initiative at www.cdc.gov/safefchild, where they will find free tip sheets, podcasts, and information on how parents can prevent injuries.

Fast Stats from the AHRQ

Pressure ulcers were present during 503,300 hospital stays in 2006, reported the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality in December 2008. This represents a 78.9% increase over the 281,300 hospital stays linked to pressure ulcers in 1993.

Patients who understand their discharge instructions are 30% less likely to be readmitted to the hospital or to visit the ED than are patients who don't know this information. And their costs are about \$412 lower, too. ▼