Evidence-Based Provider Tools for Efficient Identification and Management of Cognitive Impairment

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Introduction:
Cognitive impairment and dementia are common conditions among elderly patients, yet often go unrecognized in the primary care setting. Despite the availability of gold standard diagnostic guidelines and the recent inclusion of cognitive screening as a component of the Medicare Annual Wellness visit, few physicians assess for dementia as part of routine care. Many providers are still extremely reluctant to embrace dementia screening and diagnosis because the work-up and management of these patients is perceived to be unclear, complex, time consuming, and burdensome.

Methods:
ACT on Alzheimer’s© is a statewide collaboration between over 50 medical, academic, community, government, business, and nonprofit stakeholders working to transform Minnesota’s medical and long-term care systems and communities to better support individuals with dementia and their families. These efforts have resulted in several tools designed to simplify dementia management in primary care.

Goals of ACT on Alzheimer’s:
- Identify & prevent dementia
- Reduce awareness & reduce stigma
- Increase detection & improve care
- Equip communities

Benefits of Early Diagnosis:
- Optimize medical management of dementia & other conditions
- Improve clinical outcomes
- Avoid or reduce future costs
- Risk reduction
- Access to services
- Plan for the future
- Save gained from better health
- Maximize decision-making autonomy
- Diagnosis as a human right

Importance of Early Disease Detection

Results:
The ACT on Alzheimer’s© Clinical Provider Practice Tool offers clinicians a streamlined, 1 page protocol to guide decision making in each of 3 topics: cognitive screening, dementia work-up/diagnosis, and disease management. The guidelines incorporate best practice recommendations and can easily be adapted to different settings and diverse practice groups.

A second tool for the electronic medical record (EMR) provides an evidence-based template to assist clinicians in implementing a standardized approach to all aspects of dementia care within the health record. This Decision Support Tool may be used within a variety of EMR products and can be modified to meet the unique needs of each healthcare system. The templates provide a way to:
- Promote best practices in dementia care
- Quickly access and administer screening measures
- Guide orders for appropriate labs and other diagnostics
- Connect patients and families to helpful resources at the point of care

EMR Decision Support Tool:

Clinical Provider Practice Tool:

Conclusions:
Several evidence-based tools are now available to simplify and standardize cognitive screening, dementia work-up/diagnosis, and disease management in primary care. Multiple large healthcare systems in Minnesota have already adopted the tools and efforts are currently underway to evaluate outcomes. More information and free copies of these and other tools for dementia care can be found at the ACT on Alzheimer’s© website: www.ACTonALZ.org/provider-practice-tools

Other tools include:
- Care Coordination Practice Tool
- Community Service Provider Practice Tool