

IDENTIFYING DELIRIUM

ABCs OF IDENTIFICATION



Acute/subacute

- Altered mental status from baseline

Behavioral disturbance

- Restless, agitated, combative

Changes in consciousness

- Jittery, drowsy, difficult to arouse

CAUSES OF DELIRIUM

- Sleep deprivation
- Dehydration
- Medications
- Pain
- Immobility

COMMON SYMPTOMS

- Drowsiness or agitation
- Refusing therapy/meals
- Refusing medications
- Arguing with staff or family members
- Hallucinating
- Wandering off



TREATING AND PREVENTING DELIRIUM

1. MODIFY ENVIRONMENT

- Orient often—time, date, place
- Provide calendar/clock in room
- Surround with familiar faces

2. PROMOTE NORMAL SLEEP

- Reduce noise, dim lights
- Promote sleep at night and activity during day

3. CORRECT SENSORY DEFICITS

- Eyeglasses
- Hearing aids
- Pain management
- Good lighting

4. ENHANCE DAYTIME ACTIVITIES

- Cognitive stimulation—word games, crossword puzzles, current events discussion
- Encourage physical/occupational therapy
- Active while awake; only sleep at night
- MOBILIZE!

5. PREVENT DEHYDRATION

- Small sips of water throughout the day
- Encourage good nutrition—supplement if necessary with smoothies or protein drinks
- Address constipation

