

**Speaker:**

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**Title of presentation:**

The psychology of continence in Dementia: Understanding, managing and resolving the challenge of toileting difficulties.

**Introduction / Objective of presentation:**

Is incontinence an early onset problem in dementia? In most cases the answer is no.

Are toileting difficulties to be expected early in the process of decline? For many people the answer is yes.

Are these incompatible responses to the same question, or can we draw a distinction between a toileting difficulty and incontinence?

This presentation addresses these differences, and examines why a person with dementia may start to urinate and soil in the “wrong” places.

**Method:**

In the process it will be revealed that the achievement and maintenance of continence is a complex skill. A skill that may be severely affected in dementia and irrevocably compromised if dementia is seen as an insurmountable obstacle to understanding who people with dementia are and why they do what they do.

If we conceptualize dementia as a cognitive disability the challenge is to appreciate how a person may achieve continence in the face of progressively severe cognitive impairment. Consequently, this presentation will consider the critical aetiological domains of pathology, person and setting using the methodologies of ‘pinpointing’ and functional analysis. The former addressing the question ‘what does the person do’, the latter considering ‘why’?

Case illustrations will be used to illustrate the challenges of understanding and resolving dysfunctional toileting behaviour which can be best understood in terms of ‘unmet need’. In turn this means that care plans are geared to meet the need that is being explicitly or implicitly expressed not to manage the consequences of failing to do so.

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