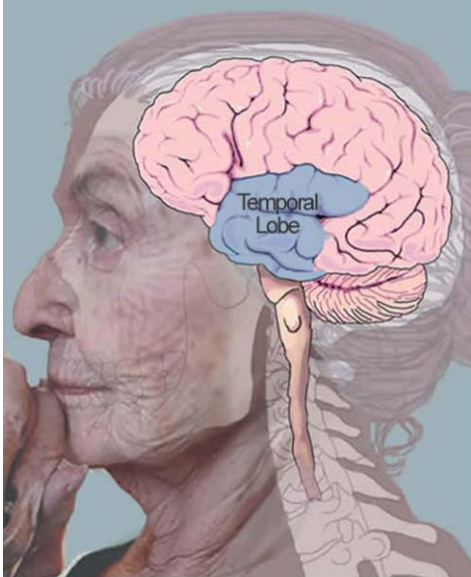


## The 7 A's of Dementia

### 2. Amnesia: Loss of Memory



#### Deficits:

- Short-term memory loss: difficulty learning new information
- Long-term memory loss: difficulty recalling previously learned information
- In dementia, long-term memory loss occurs in reverse order; i.e. the last thing learned is the first thing lost
- The individual with dementia lives in the present, but can only access information from the past. This dissonance can lead to fear and anxiety, resulting in a variety of responsive behaviours.
- "The person's reality is not our reality."

#### Associated Behaviours:

- An inability to remember what happened this morning or last week, but able to remember information from a long time ago (memory loss in reverse order)
- Becoming anxious, overwhelmed, or frustrated by too much new information
- Accusing others of being imposters, withholding information, stealing, or not visiting
- Becoming suddenly uncooperative with familiar tasks or activities
- Refusing assistance with care
- Repeating questions, comments or behaviours
- Experiencing "Time Warp Delusions" - a past memory triggered by a present stimulus that can potentially cause extreme emotional reactions or misinterpretation of events.

#### Effective Care Strategies for Amnesia:

- Use memory aides or reminders such as:
  - Keeping a diary or other visible written schedules for "bath days"
  - Using a "signing book" for visitors
  - Displaying pictures of loved ones, family and friends
- Repeat information without indicating that the information has been provided previously
- Validate experiences of the past while redirecting the individual to more pleasant and meaningful activities in the present.
- Create a "memory trail" to enable new learning by doing important tasks the same way, every day. Routines are important.
- Rather than confronting them it may be helpful to offer to look for the missing items.