Wandering 101 and Dementia: Facts, Recommendations, Recovery, and Resources

Facts:

- 6 of 10 seniors will wander
- If not found within 24 hours of wandering incident, serious injury risk increases by 50%
- Complicating factors include cognitive impairments, mental health concerns, other medical conditions
- Most frequently occurs between the hours of 5-7 pm

Recommendations:

- Reduce wandering risks
- Develop occupation-based, therapeutic and reactional activities
  - Maintain physical activities
  - Monitor clients during transitions, shift changes, and evening hours for wandering and pacing
- Use environmental supports, such as barriers (ie door locks, alarm chimes, barriers)
- When a client is identified as missing:
  - Call after 15 minutes of searching
  - Provide Emergency responders with the following information
    - Name
    - Age
    - Possible places to locate the person
    - Allergies/medication

Recovery Process

- Remain calm and matter of fact when interacting with the person

Technology Supports

- GPS tracking devices
- Video monitoring

➢ Technology is not a replacement for engagement and communication!

Resources:

- Alzheimer’s Association®
- Project Lifesaver®
- MedicAlert Foundation®
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Adapted from Wandering 101: Occupational Therapy’s Role in Awareness and Prevention by Jeannie Kunz, MOT, OTR/L, BCP AOTA Board Certified in Pediatrics

References: