

Caring for loved ones with dementia

OSU ElderCare Connections



LuminaTM

Hospice & Palliative Care

Founded as **Benton Hospice Service** in 1980

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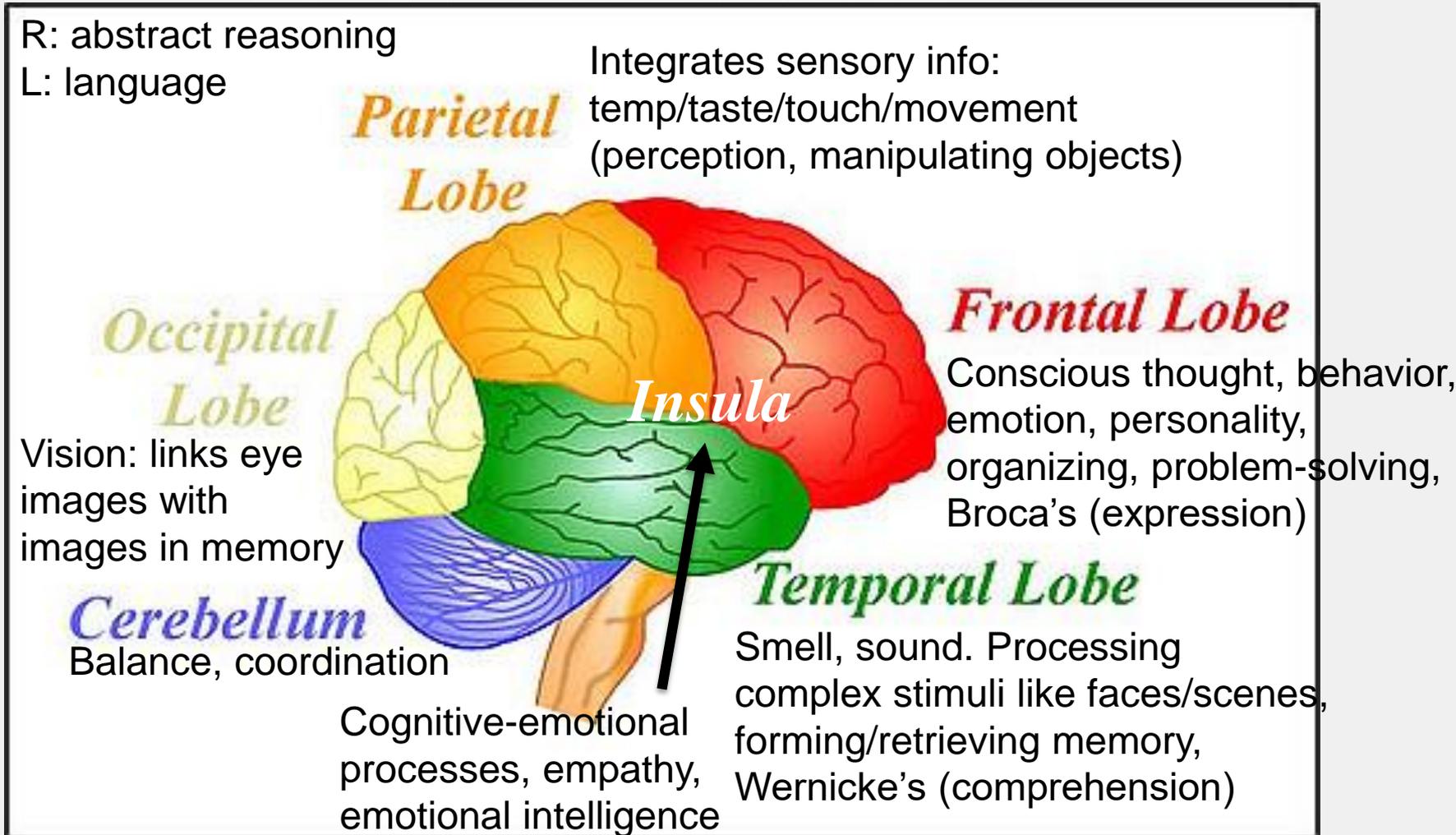
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Objectives



1. What to look for when symptoms appear
2. Considerations for caregiving
3. Planning ahead

Regions of brain and their function



Spectrum of diagnostic stages



Normal
aging
changes

Mild
cognitive
impairment

Early
dementia

Moderate
dementia

Advanced
dementia

Normal aging changes



- Name/word-finding difficulty (but stable vocabulary)
- Episodic (autobiographical) memory declines across lifespan
- Semantic memory declines in late life
- Implicit memory is unchanged across lifespan
- Slower processing; slower encoding of new info but preserved retention
- Decline with complex attention tasks
- Mental flexibility declines in late life

Mild Cognitive Impairment



- Problems with cognitive domains beyond what's expected for one's education and normal aging
- Can affect memory, language, thinking, judgment
- Problems do not impair one's function (usual daily activities)
- Family and friends may begin to notice

Pathologic brain changes



Impairments sufficient to impact daily activities

Most common types of dementia

- Alzheimers dementia
- Vascular dementia
- Lewy body dementia
- Frontotemporal
 - Behavioral variant FTD
 - Primary progressive aphasia
- Progressive supranuclear palsy

Dementia is a clinical diagnosis



- If you are concerned, ask for evaluation
- Background, education, clinical symptoms
- Time course and trajectory
- Ruling out reversible causes and illness, adverse medication effects, substance use, mental health problems, sensory impairments
- Dx made by cognitive, neurologic, functional assessment (rarely lab and brain scans)

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Considerations for caregiving



- Dementia medications have limited and underwhelming role in treatment
- Cognitive/physical/social activity more valuable (without risk of side effects or drug interactions)
- Avoid ‘talking down’
- Avoid ‘taking over’ tasks before necessary
- Avoid ‘speaking for’ loved ones before necessary
- Provide compensatory strategies and routines to maximize independence

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Planning ahead



- Comprehensive advance care planning early
 - Health decision-making
 - Finances, estate planning
 - Personal care, residential care
- Planning tools and conversation starters:
 - <https://prepareforyourcare.org>
 - theconversationproject.org
 - <https://deathoverdinner.org>
 - Death Café Corvallis
- Share



Thank you