



Geriatric Fast Facts

Topic: Course of Delirium

Delirium is a clinical state characterized by an acute, fluctuating change in mental status, with inattention and altered levels of consciousness.

Delirium begins with an **Acute Onset**; a sudden change noted over the course of hours to days. Its fluctuating course helps to distinguish it from dementia. Delirium may persist for weeks or months. Infrequently, it never clearly resolves, or it can modulate into chronic cognitive impairment.

Delirium is considered a **Medical Emergency** with variable outcomes ranging from Full Recovery to Death.

Early Recognition of Delirium can help prevent complications, mortality and/or premature admission to Long Term Care.

The Confusion Assessment Method (CAM) is a validated tool used to detect delirium and has a Sensitivity & Specificity of $\geq 90\%$.

For best course, delirium requires urgent treatment:

- 1.) Detect and flag delirium (CAM on chart?)
- 2.) Identify and treat underlying medical illness
- 3.) Identify and minimize potential contributing factors
- 4.) Pharmacological interventions should be used **only** when the symptoms pose a risk to self or others, or when they are causing significant distress

.....Next Fast Facts to discuss *Management of Delirium*...