

COGNITIVE DISORDERS

KEY TAKE HOME POINTS

- There is emerging attention to and appreciation of cognitive disorders as a source of physician impairment.
- Cognitive disorders can vary from mild to severe.
- Early identification of cognitive disorder is important to protect the public and assist the physician.
- Early stages or mild cases can be difficult to detect.
- Even more difficult is making judgments about their impact on the physician's ability to practice.
- Often, we just don't bother to address the issues because it is too difficult to make judgments about fitness-for-duty.
- Within the recovery community there is controversy about addressing issues of cognition and personality because, typically, there is significant improvement with treatment; so why bother to spend time and money on assessment?
- Among well educated professionals, early identification can be difficult.
- An evaluator must spend time with the physician in order to do a proper evaluation that uncovers subtle clues to cognitive impairment.
- Assessment tools are available to screen for cognitive disorders.
- In-depth evaluation can be aided by consultation from neuropsychologists, neurologists, and other medical specialists.
- Guard against "ageism."
- Cognitive disorders can present at any age.
- Increasing age is a risk factor for development of cognitive disorders.
- There are many causes of cognitive disorders.
- Organic disorders can cause psychiatric disorders and personality changes.
- Some psychiatric disorders can cause organic changes in the brain.
- Some cognitive disorders are progressive despite treatment; some are treatable and reversible.
- Research continues to inform the field.
- Lifestyle factors can play a role in preserving cognition in the aging process.
- Wellness committees can play an important role in assisting physicians suspected of cognitive disorders.