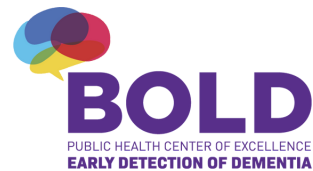


# Navigating Post-Screening Conversations



**Screening for cognitive impairment is a crucial first step to ensuring patients' overall health.**

## OVERVIEW

Detailed conversations with patients about their lives and their day to day activities provide context for cognitive screening and establishes an important partnership in ensuring best opportunities to maintain health. Supporting brain health is vital to overall health, regardless of the results of any screening activity. In the event of a positive screening test, continuity of care is essential and often helps to “complete the story”. This work is never completed on one visit as there will always be more. This is a journey for both primary care providers and these patients and their families. Primary care is exactly the vehicle for such a journey because this is always about relationships between patients, their families and providers. When impairment is detected, having readily available information to refer to other resources (e.g., community-based organizations, state or local resources) is a critical element of ongoing care.



### **Assess for cognitive impairment**

Administer a validated cognitive screening test to gauge your patient's cognitive functioning.



### **Discuss the importance of maintaining brain health**

Regardless of the screening results, patients should be made aware of the healthy lifestyle behaviors that support healthy cognitive functioning.



### **Conduct a patient needs assessment**

By conducting a needs assessment, you can get a better sense of the types of care and support your patient will need.



### **Refer patients to the appropriate resources**

To ensure that patients are getting adequate care, refer them to the appropriate services for needed support.



## AFTER THE ASSESSMENT

Below are some examples of key points to discuss with patients after administering a cognitive screening tool or after receiving screening results when completed by someone else:

- Always ask patients for their impressions first: “How do you think you did?”
- “Do you have any concerns about your memory or being able to think clearly?”
- Emphasize that this is a measure of what they did on this test on that day
- Gather more context about their cognitive abilities by asking about everyday activities – this is an important step to establishing the history of their cognitive health
- Explain terminology – “Let’s talk about this word that people often use called dementia”
- Ensure a continued partnership on their journey – “We will work on this together”
- Emphasize the positive “there are things we can do to help your brain stay healthier”
  - Talk about good care for comorbid conditions
  - Talk about proper diet and better sleep
  - Make a plan for physical activity and maintain or increase social engagement



## STRATEGIES FOR POST-SCREENING CONVERSATIONS

As you cover the key points highlighted above with your patients, it is also important to employ the following strategies listed below during post-screening conversations:

- Exercise emotional intelligence
- Explore the unstated
- Be reflective and use “us” and “we”
- Establish trust and the sense of continuity
- Identify strengths of the patient and dyad
- Find the “half-full cup”

## NEEDS ASSESSMENTS AND REFERRALS



In the event of a positive dementia screening, physicians should conduct further diagnostic evaluation. Although referral to a specialist will be considered for some patients, primary care providers can do the “diagnostic workup.” We will provide strategies for that evaluation in another document. Following disclosure of a dementia diagnosis, physicians should work closely with their patients and their patient’s social support system (e.g., family, close friends, care partner) to conduct a thorough assessment of the patient’s unique medical and psychosocial needs, in order to develop a tailored care plan.

Care planning should include referrals to local, state, and national organizations that offer services such as respite care, resources on best practices for caregiving, and community wellness centers. For instance, NYU’s Alzheimer’s and related dementias (ADRD) Family Support Program offers support and services including individual and family consultation with social workers, music and dance therapy, memory café, as well as referrals to support groups and other community organizations.