

HALO & WINGS

Edition 9, June 2014

A production of Archangel Gabriel Consultancy® Pty Ltd (Archangel)



Welcome to the ninth edition of *Halo & Wings*. The winter chill has set in. Many elderly will be affected by the cold. The elderly can experience sensory loss and may not always be able to determine how cold it is; in some cases leading to inadequate heating and/or illness. This edition explores our five main senses and the potential for feelings of isolation, loneliness and depression when there is sensory loss. Over the colder months there may be an increase in hospitalisation and Community Leaders may require support with the health care system. If you feel you need assistance, simply call Gabrielle Riches at Archangel Gabriel Consultancy to discuss your concerns.

As *Halo & Wings* can cover many topics, if you would like information on any health issues in particular or if you would like to contribute to future editions, please contact Gabrielle Riches.

A personal note from the Founder and Director

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter *Halo and Wings*. Our aim is to share information that may assist with supporting others with their health care needs.

Recently I have made some changes to my contact details. My name is now Ms Gabrielle Riches and my new email is gabrielle@archangelgabriel.net.au

The previous email address will remain operational over the next few months to allow for the changeover process and updating of databases.

All other details remain the same.

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At Archangel Gabriel Consultancy, we have changed our company tagline to "Supporting your health care needs", while continuing to specialise in clergy and congregational health care. We pride ourselves on providing varied services to support people with their health care needs with compassion while ensuring respect and dignity.

Sensory loss in the ageing

The human body has five senses; hearing, sight, touch, taste and smell. We rely on our senses to inform us of our surrounding environment and how then to respond appropriately.

As we age, sensory loss may occur. Sensory loss can lead to sensory deprivation that can then lead to an increase in memory loss, injury and/or isolation, just to mention a few aspects. All senses rely on and stimulate our brain. Sensory loss can be caused from injury to the brain and some sensory loss can affect the function of the brain.

Hearing

A loss in hearing is one sense that can affect our memory. Sound stimulates our brain. When our ears work at full capacity, we take in a wide range of sounds that our brain must sort through. Some sounds we notice, others we do not as these sounds have been processed by the brain as not important to hear at that time. Some sounds are difficult to block out and over-stimulating our brain can lead to a headache.

When hearing loss occurs, our brain has less to sort out. Recently Audiologists have shared information about studies that have shown, that due to a lack of stimulation of sound, the brain does not have to work as hard as when we have full hearing. Hence hearing loss may contribute to an increase in memory loss and dementia.

Hearing loss does not mean a person will get dementia. However hearing loss may contribute to memory loss and a decline in cognitive function may occur.

If there is any concern, a simple hearing check can identify any hearing loss and determine the need for hearing support. You can talk to your GP about your concerns and discuss the best course of action to take.

Sensory loss in the ageing

(Continued)

Sight

Together our eyes and brains work like a camera. Our eyes are the windows and lenses, while the brain processes the image. Hence we actually see with our brains. When a person has a stroke or brain injury, this part of the brain can be affected. Hence why they may not see the same image you do. Their brain may not recognise the image you are both looking at and instead searches for an image that it knows.

The part of the brain that helps us see is at the back of the head. Hence if we get a knock at the back of our head, our sight can be affected. Our sight is also affected by other conditions such as: glaucoma; macular degeneration; and cataracts. These conditions are a problem with the eye and block the images being viewed.

Loss of sight can lead to many issues and injuries. Information about vision impairment and learning how to direct/lead a person who is vision impaired can be found at www.visionaustralia.org or by visiting your GP or an Optometrist.

Touch

'Skin starved' is a term that has developed in recent years regarding caring for the aged. In a society where touch is questioned on many levels, appropriate touch between people has declined. The decline can also be attributed to more and more people living alone. The decrease in appropriate touch, for example hugging, can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Hugging has been found to be good for your heart, lower blood pressure, and lower stress levels. Therapeutic touch has also been shown to reduce stress and pain among adults, and reduces symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, such as restlessness, pacing, vocalisation, searching and tapping. (Source: www.sixwise.com)

Holding someone's hand is also a form of touch that is reassuring and comforting. It lets the person know you are there and present with them, especially when the person is unable to verbally communicate or has restricted mobility.

Sensory loss in the ageing

(Continued)

Taste and smell

Loss of taste and smell can have significant consequences on a person's health, even safety.

If a person has a loss of taste they may not be able to identify food or drinks that may be off. This could result in nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea. A loss of taste may also take the enjoyment out of eating, resulting in a decrease in food and nutrition intake.

A loss of smell can have the same effects as a loss of taste, as the person may not be able to identify food that is off. Smell also stimulates hunger. Again nutrition can become a problem.

Smell also alerts people to dangers such as having left the gas on and if smoke is present.

Smell is a strong sense that can trigger emotional responses. Scents that were once familiar and gave a person a sense of excitement will be lost due to a loss of smell. For example, the smell of coffee, certain perfumes and cooking smells.

A final sensory note

If you have any concerns about any of your senses, consult your GP at your next visit.

Dates of interest for June 2014

1-30 June is **Bowel Cancer** awareness month. More than 14,000 people each year are diagnosed with bowel cancer. For information about a healthy bowel - www.bowelcanceraustralia.org

9-15 June is **International Men's Week**. For information on men's health - www.menshealthweek.org.au

23-29 June is **World Continence Week**. For information on healthy bowel and bladder habits, and assistance for incontinence - www.continence.org.au

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