**Follow up Q & A:
Understanding Dementia webinar – Alzheimer Society of BC**

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Questions are in black
Answers from Jan Robson in blue

* Once seniors develop Alzheimer or Dementia, are there things they can do to lower risk instead of increasing their risk at certain stages?

Once a person actually has Alzheimer’s disease there is nothing she can do to lower her risk of having it progress, at least as far as we know at this point. Eating a heart-healthy diet, exercising regularly, and keeping socially connected can help improve daily functioning, but none of these measures affect the course of the disease. This is also true of most of the other progressive dementias. The one exception, possibly, is vascular dementia. Since it results from stroke activity, if the person can avoid having any further strokes, they should not progress much; however, this can be very difficult to effect.

* How do you deal with clients who don't remember phone calls or arrangements, and are upset with you because of it?

For clients who forget arrangements you have made with them, or phone calls about these arrangements, it is easiest, of course, if there is a caregiver who can take over responsibility for ensuring that these appointments are kept. If this is not the case you have a few options:

* For a person who can still read and follow a calendar, try to ensure that all information is entered on their calendars, in as much detail as possible.
* If this doesn’t work for the person you may need to call them several times; e.g. an hour before the appointment, then again 30 minutes before, and just before they are being met/picked up. Allow time; if the appointment is at 2 pm you may need to tell them it is at 1 pm, so that they can get there on time despite needing last-minute reminder calls. Remember that they DON’T remember, and saying things like “Don’t you remember? I told you about this yesterday,” really doesn’t work, and can be upsetting to the person.
* If the person gets upset with you, despite your best efforts, take the blame! Say something like “I’m so sorry! I must have forgotten to tell you.” Even if you know for sure that you did not forget, saying this doesn’t hurt you one bit and can ease the stress for the person with dementia, who is so used to being “the problem”.

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