

Care Partner Expectations

Anti-amyloid therapy is prescribed to treat Alzheimer's disease. These therapies aim to reduce the amyloid plaques in the brain, which are one of the causes of cognitive impairment. As with any medical treatment, patient safety and well-being are paramount. Care partners have an essential role to ensure this.

Anti-amyloid therapy is a commitment of time and effort. It requires an available, reliable and trustworthy support system to assure the treatment plan is successfully implemented. Here are some guidelines for a care partner to achieve this:

1. Understand the Medication and its Potential Side Effects

- **Familiarize with the drug:** Know the specific anti-amyloid therapy the patient is taking (e.g., **Donanemab (Kisunla)**, **Lecanemab (Leqembi)**).
- **Side effects:** Be aware of common side effects, including headache, dizziness, infusion-related reactions, and potential risks like amyloid-related imaging abnormalities (ARIA). **ARIA** can be a serious side effect and requires monitoring with regular brain imaging (MRI). If any of these occur, report them to the doctor immediately.

2. Monitor for Infusion-Related Reactions

- **Infusion therapy:** Many anti-amyloid therapies are administered through intravenous infusion. Be present during the infusion to observe any immediate side effects such as fever, chills, or difficulty breathing.
- **Post-infusion care:** After the infusion, monitor the patient for several hours to ensure there are no delayed reactions like dizziness, rash, or swelling.
- **Emergency contact:** Know the signs of a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis), such as difficulty breathing or swelling of the face and throat. Contact emergency services if these occur.

3. Regular Imaging and Monitoring

- **MRI scans:** Patients on anti-amyloid therapy require periodic MRI scans to detect ARIA. Be sure to adhere to the schedule for these scans and follow up with healthcare providers to discuss the results.
- **Cognitive assessments:** Regular cognitive evaluations will be required to monitor the progression of the disease. The care partner should assist the patient in keeping track of these appointments and encourage participation.
- **Monitor lab work:** Some anti-amyloid therapies may require regular blood tests or other diagnostics. Keep track of lab results and any follow-up appointments for these tests.

4. Arrange for Transportation to and from Infusions and MRIs

- **Transportation assistance:** Patients may not be able to drive themselves to and from infusion appointments or MRI scans due to side effects like dizziness, confusion, or fatigue. Ensure reliable transportation is arranged for each visit to treatment sessions and imaging appointments. This can help ensure the patient attends all necessary appointments and arrives safely.
- **Arrival at the Infusion Suite:** Once arriving at the infusion location, please ensure the patient is able to get to and from the infusion suite as there is not an escort service available.

5. Encourage Medication Adherence

- **Timely administration:** Ensure that the patient takes any oral medications or follows treatment regimens exactly as prescribed. This includes infusion schedules or any pre-medication (such as steroids) before infusions.
- **Create reminders:** Help the patient set up reminders or use pill organizers to ensure consistent adherence.

6. Monitor Cognitive and Behavioral Changes

- **Watch for worsening symptoms:** Anti-amyloid therapy may have varying effects on cognitive function. As a care partner, it is important to track any changes in the patient's memory, mood, or behavior. Note if symptoms worsen unexpectedly, and then consult the healthcare provider for guidance.
- **Promote mental and physical stimulation:** Engage the patient in activities that stimulate cognitive function, such as puzzles, reading, or socializing with family and friends.

7. Know the Emergency Plan

- **Contacting healthcare providers:** Have contact information for the patient's physician or treatment center readily available in case of any concerns or emergencies related to the anti-amyloid therapy.
- **Emergency response:** Be prepared with emergency contacts for situations involving severe reactions to the therapy, especially if the patient experiences symptoms such as loss of consciousness or severe confusion. If severe reactions or symptoms occur, please proceed to the closest emergency department.

9. Provide Emotional and Psychological Support

- **Encourage open communication:** Understand the emotional and psychological toll of Alzheimer's disease and its treatment. Be there to listen, provide reassurance, and help the patient express their feelings about the treatment.
- **Involve the patient in decisions:** When possible, involve the patient in discussions about their treatment. Empower them with information, which can help them feel more in control of their care.

10. Support Nutrition and Hydration

- **Dietary needs:** Anti-amyloid therapies may have gastrointestinal side effects. Keep track of the patient's eating habits, and encourage a balanced diet. Offer smaller, frequent meals if necessary.
- **Hydration:** Ensure the patient stays hydrated, especially if they experience side effects like nausea or vomiting.

11. Follow Legal and Ethical Guidelines

- **Patient consent:** Cognitive impairments can affect a person's capacity to decide whether to take a treatment, so it is imperative a care partner can ensure the patient's consent is obtained for the anti-amyloid therapy.
- **Planning Ahead:** Be aware of the patient's wishes regarding treatment, and review any advance directives or legal documents that outline their preferences for care.
- **Planning Ahead:** Talk to the patient about their wishes and goals with treatment. What are reasons to continue treatment? To discontinue it? Advance directives, letters, and conversations may be other resources that help explain their preferences for care and what is important to them.

These guidelines give a care partner the ability to serve a crucial role to enhance the safety and quality of mind for a patient on anti-amyloid therapy. Regular communication with healthcare providers, careful monitoring for side effects, and attention to the patient's overall well-being will contribute to the best possible outcome during treatment.