

Alzheimer's disease: find it before it finds you

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Thomas Moore once said “ We never think how great a gift it is to think. Cherish your thoughts.” The truth in that statement is all too evident because imagine waking up one day and not being able to remember the things that once made you who you are. Its unthinkable right? but to those with Alzheimer’s that’s their reality. Alzheimer’s disease is a degenerative, progressive disease that affects the memory, cognitive abilities, and behavior of an individual. This fatal disease has yet to be cured although extensive research and funds have been put forth.

The fact that Alzheimer’s cannot be definitely diagnosed until an autopsy creates several limitations. However, due to advancements in technology several methods of early detection processes have been developed to aid healthcare professionals in treating and eventually curing Alzheimer’s disease. The continuing development of early detection methods in Alzheimer’s disease enables healthcare providers to improve the patient’s quality of life and greater funds should be allocated so that a cure can be found sooner. Alzheimer’s disease has become more prevalent in the United states especially and is currently the sixth leading cause of death in America. The primary age group that this disease affects are those in their early 60’s-80’s. There are 3 main stages of Alzheimer’s disease that doctors use to categorize just how far a person has progressed: Mild Cognitive Impairment, Preclinical Think of the each stage as a higher and more deadly dose because as an individual progresses, the amyloid plaques within the brain solely cause atrophy and debilitation.

The person loses a sense of where they are, who they are and their cognitive abilities have greatly diminished. The main risk factor for Alzheimer’s disease

is aging. About 30-50% of 85 year old are affected in the United States. It is said that for every 5 years an individual lives after 65 years old, the chances of that person developing Alzheimer's disease doubles (Alzheimer's Association). In many cases, age plays a bigger role because as a person ages it means they are most susceptible to getting Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. There are genetic factors such as gene mutations that increase the risks of an individual getting Alzheimer's later on in life.

Lifestyle choices are also correlated to developing Alzheimer's disease. The way a person chooses to eat or exercise could be the determining factor that will keep them alive longer. Understanding that there are controllable risk factors that lead to Alzheimer's disease and being proactive can make all the difference. Healthcare professionals have also been making advancements in technology that allow neurologists and other specialists to identify targeted areas in the body. The use of PET Scans and MRI's in medicine today has provided a way for doctors to see what exactly is going on in the brain and the progression of the plaques within the brain. Although these methods are only in use for partial diagnosis, an individual can receive better treatment and patient care.

In addition with developmental research underway, scientists have created nanotechnology antibody systems that allow antibodies, that kill the amyloid plaques, to be shot through the nasal cavity and into the brain. This type of innovation allows doctors to have a more aggressive method of aiding patients who have Alzheimer's disease. Early detection may not seem as concrete as diagnosis but in many cases such as Alzheimer's where definitive diagnosis is unavailable, these methods allow doctors to know

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what is happening so that patient comfortable and quality of life is improved. There is nothing worse than not knowing what is happening to you and with the restrictive nature of this disease, Alzheimer's research is crucial to finding an eventual cure. Alzheimer's disease is rapidly spreading and shows no sign of stopping which is why without better research and adequate monetary funds, we will get left behind.

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