

Alzheimer's disease – essay 2

[Health & Medicine](#), [Disease](#)



Alzheimer's Disease Joy Pachowicz PSY 350 Professor Alina Sheppe Perez
May 15, 201 Introduction Alzheimer's disease, despite being so widespread, is not really considered part of the aging process. According to Robert Feldman, author of the textbook, “ UnderstandingPsychology”, only 19% of people who are ages 75 to 84 suffer from this disease. It is only once they pass the age of 85, that the elderly need to be more concerned about the possibility of developing Alzheimer's disease. (Feldman, p. 446)

Fifty percent of all people over 85 years of age suffer from Alzheimer's disease and researchers believe that if no cure for the disease is found by the year 2050; there will be 14 million people affected by this disease. (Feldman, p. 446) What is Alzheimer's disease and how is it diagnosed? What are its symptoms and who are most likely to develop this disease? The purpose of this paper is to explore what Alzheimer's disease is and offer some suggestions of how to approach it in the future. What is Alzheimer's Disease?

According to the Alzheimer's Foundation of America, Alzheimer's Disease is a “ progressive, degenerative disorder that attacks the brain's nerve cells, or neurons, resulting in the loss of memory, thinking, language skills, and behavioral changes” (www. alzfdn. org) With Alzheimer's disease, neuron cells are destroyed in the hippocampus, and this is what sparks the loss of short term memory; and as neuron cells die in the cerebral cortex, so too the functionality of language and clear thinking sees a marked decline in the person who has developed Alzheimer's disease (www. lzfdn. org) With Alzheimer's disease, there is diminished production of the neurotransmitter, acetylcholine. Acetylcholine is a neurotransmitter that is very much involved

with our ability to memorize and retain information; so, if there is a decrease in Acetylcholine; our memory's ability to function suffers greatly. (Feldman, p. 66) Symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease How does one know to even consult with a specialist or seek out one's physician regarding Alzheimer's disease? There are some telltale symptoms that set up red flags of warning.

If you see any of these symptoms, please see a physician to determine if you have Alzheimer's disease: 1. Memory Loss that disrupts Daily Life 2.

Difficulties in planning events or solving problems 3. Difficulties performing familiar tasks or household work 4. Confusion with time or place. 5. Troubles interpreting visual images and spacial relationships 6. Problems with forming words or with communicating Losing items and not being able to remember what one recently did. 7. Failing and poor judgement 8. Withdrawal from work or social activities 9. Changes in Mood or Behavioral (www. lz. org)

Now just because you may have one or all these doesn't necessarily mean you have Alzheimer's disease. Time is very much a key element in acting on these symptoms. If these symptoms persist over a long period of time; then it's time to have a professional evaluation of the symptoms. . Diagnosing Alzheimer's Disease According to the Alzheimer's Association, there are several steps to take when trying to diagnose Alzheimer's disease. First, one must consult with his/her medical doctor. When going, it's important to take a copy of one's whole medical history.

While at the consultation, one can be given a mental status test. Along with this test, a physical and neurological exam should be given. Blood tests should be taken to rule out other possible causes of memory loss. (www. alz.

org) The specialists one could see to determine whether one is suffering from Alzheimer's disease and not some other illness are: Psychologists, Neurologists and Psychiatrist. (www. alz. org) Stages of Alzheimer's Disease As with other diseases, Alzheimer's has varying stages it progresses through as it develops in the body and affects the brain.

The first stage consists of the mere manifestation of the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, which we have already listed: memory problems, difficulty forming words, forgetfulness etc. (www. nia. nih. gov) The next stage would be what doctors would label the mild stage of Alzheimer's disease. During this stage, cognitive abilities are more impaired. There are difficulties with handling money or paying bills. Repeating things over and over again begin to be notice. (www. nia. nih. gov) The mild stage gives way to the moderate stage of Alzheimer's disease.

New symptoms appear and older ones worsen. Memory continues to decline in this stage. In this stage it becomes more and more difficult to recognize family and friends. In the moderate stage of Alzheimer's disease there are hallucinations and paranoia. It's more difficult to get dressed, wash and perform simple task. (www. nia. nih. gov) The final stage of Alzheimer's disease is the severe stage. People with severe Alzheimer's disease spend most their time in bed, sleeping. Their body shuts down. (www. nia. nih. gov) Treating Alzheimer's disease

Since Alzheimer's disease is caused by a plaque buildup in the synapse that prevents the communication of neurons, one to another; researchers have found a way to allow these neurons to communicate despite this buildup.

Donepezil is one such drug that has been released for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. Another name for this drug is Aricept. What Aricept does is increases the memory's capacity. (Feldman, p. 229) There are other drugs being tested; but, right now the most popular treatment for Alzheimer's disease is the use of Aricept. In the News

Researchers of Banner SunHealthResearch Institute have been studying the relationship that copper and cholesterol have to Alzheimer's disease. They believe that dementia is caused by tangles and plaque in the brain. Copper has been implicated in the increased progression of Alzheimer's disease in those who have the disease. Cholesterol, which is a major cause of plaque buildup in other parts of the body, therefore, it can be a contributing cause of plaque buildup in the brain. (redorbit. com) " In the BSHRI study, Sparks and his team performed a pilot study of long-term dietary cholesterol in four groups of rabbits.

One group was administered normal food and water and three groups were administered increasing levels of a cholesterol diet for five months. Significantly, plasma levels of tau increased by 40 to 50 percent in each of the cholesterol-fed animal groups after five months of the experimental diet" (redorbit. com) In another research program being conducted by scientists through the USF Health Byrd Alzheimer's Institute, Indiana University and Florida's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center; a certain protein: beta amyloid was singled out to be the cause of neurons malfunctioning that causes memory loss which is associated with Alzheimer's Disease. (redorbit. com) " By identifying a brand new and extremely important target of the

amyloid protein's toxicity, we can develop drugs for Alzheimer's disease that may protect the motors from inhibition and allow the brain to regenerate properly," said principal investigator Huntington Potter, PhD, a professor of Molecular Medicine who holds the Pfeiffer Endowed Chair for Alzheimer's Disease Research. " (redorbit. com) Coping with Alzheimer's disease " There are many ways to fight the adverse symptoms of Alzheimer's disease.

Below are some ways a person can cope with Alzheimer's disease:

- Keep a notebook handy to record important numbers, appointments and dates.
- Use sticky note to help remember things of importance
- Keep important phone numbers next to telephone (in large print)
- Have a contact who will call to remind of meal times, appointments or other.
- Use a calendar to keep track of the day of week.
- Keep photos of important people around; have names of who these important people are somewhere on the picture.
- When going out always have another person to go along, to avoid getting lost.

For Care Providers

- " Providing a healthy lifestyle is a must. Good nutrition, exercise and appropriate social interactions all help to develop a healthy environment for the Alzheimer's patient.
- Have a planned daily routine .. so that Alzheimer's patient can develop a sense of accomplishment and value.
- Choose proper times for activities. Many times night time is not a good time for Alzheimer's patients.
- Encourage independence with the Alzheimer's patient, let them do for themselves as much as possible.
- Speak slowly and calmly
- Make eye contact. Give simple instructions " (webmd. com)

Conclusion Alzheimer's disease is a widely spread disease that affects a great number of elderly people worldwide. While it is frequently associated with old age; it is not considered part of the aging process. Recent studies

provided some hopeful ways to help stop the spread of Alzheimer's disease, and also provided warnings of what can happen if a cure to Alzheimer's disease is not found.. While a person may show many symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, only a medical doctor can confirm whether Alzheimer's disease is present.

Through various tests, doctors rule out other possible diseases before focusing on Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's disease has many stages and faces and the best approach is to arrest it while it's in its early stages. Once Alzheimer's settles in and brain cells start dying, the only thing left to do is to accommodate the limitations that come with the disease. Educating oneself about Alzheimer's disease is a must for everyone. More than likely, every one of us will come face to face with it in one fashion or another.

We will either be taking care of someone who has it; or, we will develop it ourselves. Alzheimer's disease affects both the patient and those around him/her. Take time to become knowledgeable of this disease, it's worth the effort. . References Alzheimer's Disease: Special Tips for Maintaining a Normal life. Retrieved From. [http://www. webmd. com/alzheimers/caregivers-09/memory-tips](http://www.webmd.com/alzheimers/caregivers-09/memory-tips) Coping With Alzheimer's: Special Instructions for Care Providers. Retrieved From [http://www. webmd. com/alzheimers/caregivers-09/caregivers-tips](http://www.webmd.com/alzheimers/caregivers-09/caregivers-tips) Feldman. R. F. (2008).

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