

A progressive mental disorder health essay

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Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia. Dementia is a general term used for loss of memory and other intellectual capabilities serious enough to inhibit the day-to-day life. Approximately 50 to 80 percent of dementia cases are caused by Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's disease commonly starts after the age of 60. The risk is increased as someone gets older. The risk is also great if a family member is suffering from the Alzheimer's disease. The greatest well-known risk factor of Alzheimer's is advance age. Alzheimer's is not a part of regular and normal aging, however, the majority of persons with Alzheimer's are 65 and above. Almost 5 percent of individuals with the Alzheimer's disease have early onset of the disease, which frequently appears when somebody is in 40 or 50 years old.

Alzheimer's disease was first detected 100 years ago, but studies about its risk factors, causes, symptoms and treatment have been conducted from the last 30 years. Even though studies have discovered a lot about Alzheimer's disease, the detailed physiologic variations that activate the growth of Alzheimer's disease mostly remain unidentified. The only exception is a rare and inherited type of disease which is caused by identified genetic mutations. In Alzheimer's disease, the brain cells degenerate and the connection between the cells also deteriorate resulting in continuous decline in memory and intellectual function. Alzheimer's disease begins slowly. At start it involves the area of brain that control language, thought and memory. People with Alzheimer's disease have trouble recalling things that occurred in recent times or names of persons they know. In Alzheimer's disease the symptoms get worse over the period of time. People may possibly not identify family members or have problems in reading, writing or speaking. At advanced stage, they may become aggressive or anxious.

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Ultimately, they require complete care. Alzheimer's is a rapidly progressive disorder, while dementia slowly worsens over years. In early stages of Alzheimer's, memory loss is very mild, but in advance stages, persons lose the capability to communicate and respond. People suffering from Alzheimer's live an average of 8 years after their signs and symptoms become obvious to others. Survival rate ranges from 4 to 20 years, depending on age and health conditions of the patients. There is no treatment to stop the disease progression. Though, some medications may stop signs and symptoms from getting worse for only a limited time. Existing Alzheimer's disease treatments and management plans may briefly improve signs and symptoms. At times, this can help persons with Alzheimer's disease to function properly and independently. However, there's no remedy for Alzheimer's disease, it's vital to get supportive care as early as possible.

Link to websites

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/alzheimersdisease.html>
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/alzheimers-disease/DS00161>
http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_what_is_alzheimers.asp

Causes of Alzheimer's disease

Even though a great deal of research is going to evaluate the potential causes of Alzheimer's disease, but specialists are still not sure about the reason why the brain cells stop working and deteriorate. The steady loss of brain function involved in Alzheimer's appears to be due to two forms of brain cell damage: deposition of tangles that are called neurofibrillary tangles and proteins known as plaques. Though, there are numerous factors that can be linked to the disease progression. These comprise:

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Age

The risk of Alzheimer's disease doubles after every five years of life when the person reaches the age of 65. Even though Alzheimer's disease is primarily a disorder that develops in old age, some younger persons may also develop the disease.

Family history

A person whose close family member is suffering from Alzheimer's disease has a somewhat higher risk of developing this disease. Approximately 7% of all Alzheimer's cases are connected with the genes that result in the early onset of inherited and familial type of the disease. However, people who do inherit the Alzheimer's, the disease may begin at an earlier age.

Down's syndrome

Persons with Down's syndrome are prone to develop Alzheimer's disease because they have an additional copy of chromosome number 21 that contains a protein which is present in the brain of individuals with Alzheimer's. As persons with Down's syndrome have a greater amount of this protein, their risk of developing Alzheimer's disease is also greater.

Head injuries

Persons who had head injuries have a greater risk of developing Alzheimer's. Numerous studies support this evidence

Aluminum

Aluminum is present in the tangles and plaques which are seen in the brains of patients suffering from Alzheimer's. Some studies have proposed that absorption of aluminum by humans may possibly increase the risk of

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developing Alzheimer's. Though, studies are unsuccessful to find a connection. Aluminum is present in certain plants and foods. It is also found in several cooking pans, medicines and wrapping. Experts doubt there is a connection because human bodies absorb small amount of aluminum and then excrete it.

Gender

Women are prone to develop Alzheimer's disease than men. Women's average life expectancy is more than men, and Alzheimer's risk increases with age, this may possibly explain the reason.

Mild intellectual impairment

Individuals who have mild intellectual impairment have memory issues but not Alzheimer's disease. Their memory is poorer than other persons of the similar age. A greater percentage of persons with mild intellectual impairment develop Alzheimer's disease, compared to other individuals.

Atrial fibrillation

There is a strong association between development of Alzheimer's and atrial fibrillation.

Lifestyle factors

People having high cholesterol level, high blood pressure and diabetes mellitus have increased risk of Alzheimer's disease. Taking a balanced diet, doing regular exercise, controlling bodyweight, and taking 7 to 8 hours of sleep may perhaps remove these risk factors.

Low IQ level

There are some studies showing a higher risk of Alzheimer's disease among persons with low IQ level and lower educational qualifications. Reason is still unknown.

Nitrates

There is a significant connection between an increased amount of nitrates in food and development of Alzheimer's disease. Nitrates are present in preserved and processed foods as well as in fertilizers.

Others

The following conditions have been connected to a greater risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Certain chronic inflammatory diseases
History of clinical depression
Strokes
Obesity

Link to websites

<http://www.webmd.com/alzheimers/guide/understanding-alzheimers-disease-basics>
<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/159442.php>

Alzheimer's symptoms

Initially, poor memory or slight confusion may be the only indication of Alzheimer's that you notice. But with the passage of time, there is further decline in memory, particularly latest memories. The progression of the disease depends on individual patient and differs from person to person. Brain changes related with Alzheimer's disease can cause the following symptoms:

Memory

The most common symptom of Alzheimer's disease is memory loss, such as forgetting recently learned information, important dates or events; increased dependence on memory aides or family members for recalling things; asking for the same info again and again. Everybody has random memory losses. It's normal to forget where you put your things or forget the name of a colleague. However, the memory loss related with Alzheimer's disease continues and deteriorates, affecting the ability to function at home and at work. Persons with Alzheimer's may: Forget conversations, events or appointments, and not recall them later Repeat statements and questions Routinely forget possessions, often placing them in odd places Ultimately forget the names of everyday objects and family members Confusion and misunderstanding Unable to recall what day it is, the month or the season

Speaking and writing

Persons with Alzheimer's may have trouble joining or following a conversation. They may possibly stop in the middle of a discussion and they may repeat themselves or have no idea how to continue. They might struggle with terminology, have difficulties finding the word or they call things by the wrong name. Over passage of time, the ability to write also declines.

Reasoning and thinking

Alzheimer's causes difficulty thinking and concentrating, particularly about intellectual concepts like numbers. It may be puzzling to manage money,

balance the checkbooks, and keep record of bills. These problems may progress to incapability to deal and recognize the numbers.

Making decisions and judgments

Persons with Alzheimer's disease may experience alterations in decision-making or judgment. Such as; they cannot deal properly with money. They do not care about keeping themselves clean. Responding effectively to everyday problems becomes increasingly challenging.

Planning and performing familiar tasks

Some persons may experience alterations in their capability to make and follow a plan. They may have problem keeping track of monthly bills or following a familiar recipe. They may have difficulty in concentrating and doing things. Routine activities that require consecutive steps, for example playing a favorite game or planning and cooking a meal become a struggle when the disease progresses. Finally, people with advanced Alzheimer's disease may forget how to do basic tasks such as bathing and dressing.

Misperception of time and place

Persons with Alzheimer's disease can lose track of phase of day, date and time. At times they may forget at what place they are or how they reach there.

Deviations in behavior and personality

Brain changes that occur in Alzheimer's can affect the way you feel and perform. Persons with Alzheimer's disease may experience: Social withdrawal Depression Mood swings Irritability Aggressiveness Distrust in others Alterations in sleeping habits Loss of inhibitions Wandering Misbeliefs

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Link to websites

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/alzheimers-disease/DS00161/DSECTION=symptoms>

http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_10_signs_of_alzheimers.asp

Alzheimer's stages

There are 7 stages of Alzheimer's disease. Patients usually take 8 to 10 years to experience all stages.

Stage 1 - No deficiency

Intellectual abilities and memory appear to be normal. Memory or mental problems can't be identified.

Stage 2 - Minimal intellectual deterioration or minimal Deficiency

The changes in this stage could be normal age associated or these could be the initial symptoms of Alzheimer's. About 50% of people over 65 years of age start feeling problems with remembering the occasional word. The individual may feel there are infrequent memory lapses.

Stage 3 - Mild intellectual deterioration or early confusion

Early-stage Alzheimer's disease is usually diagnosed at this stage. It lasts for about 2-7 years. The person has slight troubles which have certain impact on routine functions. In various cases the person will try to hide the problems. These problems comprise; Troubles with word recall, planning, organization, misplacing things and failing to recall recent information Problem reading a

passageway and holding information from it Issues with company or business The capability to learn new stuffs may be affected Irritability, anxiety or depression

Stage 4 - Early stage disease or moderate intellectual deterioration

Duration of this stage is about 2 years. The symptoms include; Reduced memory Difficulties with data which influence the family finance such as checkbooks, managing bills etc Unable to recall personal history Unable to remember current events or recent occasions Consecutive tasks become more problematic, comprising cooking, driving, many domestic routines, shopping, reading and making choices. Negates that there is some problem and becomes self-protective and defensive Withdraws from social events, discussions, thought provoking and puzzling situations Needs help with complex phases of independent life

Stage 5 - Moderate mid-stage disease or moderately severe intellectual deterioration

The duration of this stage is approximately 18 months The features of this stage are; Intellectual decline is more serious. Unable to recall details about personal history, such as academic history, personal address, telephone numbers, etc. Cannot live independently and needs some support with everyday tasks. Disoriented in time and space Cannot remember what day it is Difficulties with numbers Need supervision and help while dressing, including choosing right outfit for the season or incident. Easy target for fraudsters Still able to eat and go to the toilet independently. Unable to remember recent information steadily

Stage 6 - Moderately severe mid-stage disease or severe intellectual deterioration

This stage lasts for about 2½ years. The features of this stage are; There is continues decline in memory. Substantial change in personality Entirely unaware of recent experiences Need all-round assistance with everyday deeds. Are familiar with close family members but cannot remember their names Cannot recall personal history but may remember the name Ability to dress gradually declines. Need assistance in dressing. Able to communicate pain and pleasure nonverbally Experience fecal or urinary incontinence Disturbance of sleep patterns Become suspicious, obsessed, aggressive Usually wander away and become lost Repeat words or repeatedly utters sounds Obsessive behavior Hallucinations Smell, hear or see things that are not existing Worried, disturbed, particularly at evening Can respond to non-verbal communications Finally require supervision and care

Stage 7 - Severe or late-stage disease or very severe Intellectual deterioration

This stage lasts for 1 to 2 and a half years. During this stage of disease patients lose the aptitude to react to the environment, they are unable to speak, and ultimately unable to control body movement. The length of this stage may possibly depend on the quality of care and support the patient gets. Important features of this stage are; Severely limited intellectual capability Patients cannot recognize speech, but can utter words or moans Body coordination start to fail Cannot manage daily activities independently Health deteriorates Reflexes may be abnormal Swallowing becomes difficult. Chocking becomes common. Seizures Muscles become

rigidPatient may be confined to bedSpends more time sleepingRequire
constant careSense of smell may be impaired

Link to websites

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/159442.php>http://www.helpguide.org/elder/alzheimers_disease_symptoms_stages.htm

Characteristics of Alzheimer's disease

There are various warning signs and symptoms for Alzheimer's. Such as;

Memory loss

Memory loss can have concerns on day-to-day life in several ways, such as; safety hazards, communication problems behavioral problems. At the beginning of the illness, people with Alzheimer's, do not seem to have any difficulty memorizing distant events but may forget something five minutes ago. Memories of past events though not greatly affected but they still tend to affect the current activities. The person may be acting according to past routine which is no longer appropriate. The person with Alzheimer's may not remember what words mean, e. g. a dog or a flower and how to perform activities both mentally and physically, such as, how to use a spoon and knife or play chess. Patients feel difficulties in carrying out regular activities such as washing, dressing and cooking.

Apraxia

This term refer to the inability to carry out purposeful and voluntary movements although muscular power, coordination and sensibility are intact. In daily terms this may comprise the inability to turn a tap on, tie shoelaces, switch on a radio or fasten buttons.

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Aphasia

This term describes loss of the capability to speak or comprehend spoken or written language due to the damage of certain area of brain. This may become obvious in a number of ways. It may involve replacing a word which is linked by meaning such as clock instead of time, using the wrong word but one which sounds similar such as coat instead of boat or use a totally different word with no obvious link. When accompanied by the persistent repetition of a phrase or word, the result may be a form of speech that is difficult for others to comprehend.

Agnosia

It describes the loss of the capability to recognize what objects are and what their use. For instance, a person with agnosia may attempt to use a spoon instead of a fork, a knife instead of a pencil or a shoe instead of a cup etc. This may involve failing to recognize who people are, due to memory loss and deterioration of the brain cells.

Communication

Persons with Alzheimer's have problems with the production and understanding of language which in turn lead to other complications. Many people also lose the capability to read and to interpret the signs.

Personality changes

Persons with Alzheimer's disease may behave completely out of character. An individual who has always been polite, quiet and friendly may behave in a violent and bad-mannered way. Abrupt and recurrent mood changes are common.

Behavior

Wandering is a common symptom of Alzheimer's disease. There are a number of reasons for this wandering but it is often impossible to find out the reasons due to communication problems. Other symptoms affecting behavior include aggressive behavior, incontinence and confusion in time and space.

Physical changes

Weight loss can occur despite the normal food intake. At times the person forgets to chew or swallow, mainly in the later stages of the illness. Another concern of Alzheimer's is the wasting away of muscles and in case of bed-ridden there may be the problem of bed sores. With advanced age the susceptibility to infection increases. As a result of this increased susceptibility, many persons with Alzheimer's die from pneumonia.

Link to websites

<http://www.alzheimer-europe.org/Dementia/Alzheimer-s-disease/Main-characteristics-of-Alzheimer-s-disease?#fragment-1>http://www.interactivecarenetwork.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=128:characteristics-of-alzheimers&catid=32:more-helpful-information&Itemid=255