

Alzheimer's disease essay

[Business](#), [Decision Making](#)



1 FINAL PROJECT ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE David Casey 2 " Alzheimer's disease (frequently called " dementia"), a degenerative process resulting in a large loss of brain cells with the resulting progressive loss of memory" (Anee Steed, 2000).

I chose Alzheimer's disease for my project with its over-whelming affect it has on people. The people whom I have known prior to them having Alzheimer's the results were that they no longer were familiar with me. The main interest is that it is hard for me to comply with such a dramatic personality change which can over-take someone. Additional research on Alzheimer's hopefully will give me more knowledge on how I can avoid it in the future and gain more of an understanding of what people are dealing with. " Age is the most important known risk factor for AD. The number of people with the disease doubles every 5 years beyond age 65" (National Institute on Aging, 2007).

Clearly age seems to be the number one risk factor involved and this leads me to believe that longevity in living a mentally and physically healthy life style should help reduce the risk. The most common form of AD is late-onset, but there is also another form of AD called early-onset which is likely to occur between the ages of 30-60. I was unaware that there was more than one form of AD and scientists believe that early-onset may be more of a hereditary cause.

" Scientists are finding increasing evidence that some of the risk factors for heart disease and stroke, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and low levels of the vitamin folate, may also increase the risk of AD. Evidence

for physical, mental, and social activities as protective factors against AD is also increasing" (National Institute on Aging, 2007). Physical, mental, and social activities seem like they can have a positive or negative affect on future health issues depending on how you live your life. It is nice to know that we as people can more so have some control over this outcome based on our life choices. "AD begins slowly. At first, the only symptom may be mild forgetfulness, which can be confused with age-related memory change. Most people with mild forgetfulness do not have AD" (National Institute of Aging, 2007).

This is rather scary because it seems as though Alzheimer's will most likely sneak up on you. Something such as mild forgetfulness does not seem that it should hold any major concerns with it. It is unfortunate that something as devastating as AD can overwhelm you without significant notice. The events toward the middle stages of AD tend to be more serious and more noticeable. "Forgetfulness begins to interfere with daily activities.

People in the middle stages of AD may forget how to do simple tasks like brushing their teeth or combing their hair. They can no longer think clearly. They can fail to recognize familiar people and places.

They begin to have problems speaking, understanding, reading, or writing" (National Institute of Aging, 2007) It is amazing that a person who does daily routines for their whole life will suddenly just begin to forget and seem completely unaware that it matters. This is very sad, I would almost be afraid to live with someone I knew who had AD because they might continually forget who I am. Facts like this should be enough to influence us as people to

whatever we can to improve our lifestyles. Sure certain events we can not avoid, but you would really regret not making simple adjustment as efforts aspects of a healthy lifestyle. Solving everyday problems, such as knowing what to do if food on the stove is burning, becomes increasingly difficult, eventually impossible Alzheimer's is characterized by greater difficulty in doing things that require planning, 4 decision making and judgment" (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2007) To me this says basically that almost every activity performed solo by someone with Alzheimer's is hazardous.

Such A disease can permit someone to have to be under supervision at all times since at any given moment they may begin to perform a task and possibly be unaware. People with Alzheimer's may exhibit mood swings. They may express distrust in others, show increased stubbornness and withdraw socially. Depression often coexists with Alzheimer's disease. Restlessness also is a common sign. As the disease progresses, people with Alzheimer's may become anxious or aggressive and behave inappropriately" (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2007) Along with lost memory and awareness control, Alzheimer's then can cause you to resent others in disbelief that you could be mislead or unknowing about something or someone. It is fully understandable as to why these symptoms could cause depressions and/or anxiety. You long longer feel like yourself and to lose that necessary control is a complete debauchery.

" An early, accurate diagnosis of AD helps patients and their families plan for the future. It gives them time to discuss care while the patient can still take part in making decisions. Early diagnosis will also offer the best chance to

treat the symptoms of the disease” (National Institute of Aging, 2007). If this disease needs to be dealt with this would be the optimal choice on how to deal with it. Unfortunately as discussed earlier the early stages of AD do not seem to be of major concern since they look like common characteristics of late aging. “ Today, the only definite way to diagnose AD is to find out whether there are plaques and tangles in brain tissue. To look at brain tissue, however, doctors usually must wait until they do an autopsy, which is an examination of the body done after a person dies. Therefore, doctors can only make a diagnosis of “ possible” or “ probable” AD while the person is still alive” (National Institute of Aging, 2007).

This does not help the fact that the early stages of AD do not show major symptoms. For this reason it is important to not taking any chances with an elderly friend or family member. By getting them to a doctor to be diagnosed you could be possibly saving them from a lot of future heartaches and headaches. “ Doctors use several tools to diagnose “ probable” AD, including: questions about the person’s general health, past medical problems, and ability to carry out daily activities, tests of memory, problem solving, attention, counting, and language, medical tests—such as tests of blood, urine, or spinal fluid, and brain scans” (National Institute of Aging, 2007). Outside of the general mental and physical problems, I found it interesting that a variety of medical tests also are needed to be examined. Since the causes of AD are so open ended there is a vast area that needs to be explored when trying to diagnose AD. “ Sometimes these test results help the doctor find other possible causes of the person’s symptoms. For

example, thyroid problems, drug reactions, depression, brain tumors, and blood vessel disease in the brain can cause AD-like symptoms.

Some of these other conditions can be treated successfully” (National Institute of Aging, 2007). These possible diagnosis factors implement the reason more to be cautious about a friend or family member whom you think may be showing symptoms of AD. For me I can say that I never would have assumed that internal issues such as the thyroid, blood vessels, and brain tumors could be possible causes. 6 Surely old age is the biggest risk factor involved with coming down with Alzheimer's. The factors however go deeper into categories such as Heredity, Sex, lifestyle and more. “ Your risk of developing Alzheimer's appears to be slightly higher if a first-degree relative — parent, sister or brother — has the disease. Although the genetic mechanisms of Alzheimer's among families remain largely unexplained, researchers have identified a few genetic mutations that greatly increase risk in some families” (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2007) Though seemingly unexplained, statistics show that family member's risk levels go up if a family member receives Alzheimer's. Unfortunately this scenario shows that risks would be more unavoidable.

“ Some researchers theorize that the more you use your brain, the more synapses you create, which provides a greater reserve as you age” (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2007) This an intriguing observation. It does make sense that less brain usage and education could decrease defenses and cause one to be more susceptible to Alzheimer's. If your brain acquires and conquers many complexities and accomplishments it very well good develop a more

adaptable stamina or ability. The only known treatments for AD are different drugs and medicines. These efforts are better than nothing but their effects really just subdue effects of AD.

The best way to possibly treat and deal with this disease is to discover it early like any other disease. Also, some medicines may help control behavioral symptoms of AD such as sleeplessness, agitation, wandering, anxiety, and depression. Treating these symptoms often makes patients more comfortable and makes their care easier for caregivers" (National Institute of Aging, 2007).

This was a question mark I had regarding this disease. It is refreshing to read that the effects of AD can be neutralized to give a caregiver a more bearable situation. This way the person with AD can keep some levels of familiarity and worries will be reduced for the caregiver. Here I will be mentioning some breaking events involving new areas of research. " Scientists are finding that damage to parts of the brain involved in memory, such as the hippocampus, can sometimes be seen on brain scans before symptoms of the disease occur" (National Institute of Aging, 2007) This process is called Neuroimaging, it is intended to see early AD changes or measure the disease progression. " During the past several years, scientists have focused on a type of memory change called mild cognitive impairment (MCI), which is different from both AD and normal age-related memory change. People with MCI have ongoing memory problems, but they do not have other losses such as confusion, attention problems, and difficulty with

language" (National Institute of Aging, 2007) People with MCI may not have Alzheimer's but still have to the potential to receive it.

There are research programs conducted to reduce the potential development of AD with uses of the drugs donepezil and placebo helped reduce the risk of AD for an 18 month period. Alzheimer's is a very devastating and depressing disability to acquire. I have learned that mental/psychological factors are just as important as physical factors when it comes to the causes. Unfortunately it seems that the majority of Alzheimer's cases are either hereditary or due to old age. Managing your physical and mental health will prepare you to challenge Alzheimer's and help you to avoid it. As you or someone close to you gets older it is important to watch for symptoms. This disease needs to be nipped at its early stages to prevent as many issues as possible.

This has helped me to realize the importance of mental health. This day and age we see everything from the outside fitness and appearance are the major implementations. We can not fail to recognize the importance of psychological issues and events. Just as your weight gets dealt with during a diet, your brain needs attention when it encounters a crisis. REFERENCES

Alzheimer's Disease Fact Sheet, National Institute on Aging, 2007

Alzheimer's Disease, Mayo Clinic Staff, 2007