the basics
memory loss, dementia and alzheimer’s disease
Objectives

1) Define Dementia and it’s symptoms

2) Review the diagnostic process

3) Learn about support services for persons with dementia and their families
The impact of Alzheimer’s disease

Ron Petersen, MD, PhD, is Director of the Mayo Alzheimer's Disease Research Center
Typical age-related changes involve:

- Making a bad decision once in a while
- Missing an occasional monthly payment
- Forgetting which day it is and remembering later
- Sometimes forgetting which word to use
- Losing things from time to time
Joyce has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease
Problematic changes

1. Memory changes that disrupt daily life
2. Challenges in planning or solving problems
3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks
4. Confusion with time or place
5. Trouble with visual images and spatial relationships
6. New problems with words in speaking or writing
7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
8. Decreased or poor judgment
9. Withdrawal from work or social activities
10. Changes in mood and personality
What is dementia?
Understanding dementia

Dementia

- Reversible dementias
  - Vascular dementia
  - Lewy body disease
  - Frontotemporal dementia
- Alzheimer's disease
Problematic changes

Steve has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease, the most common form of dementia
What is dementia?

- Loss of cognitive functioning serious enough to interfere with daily functioning
- Causes changes in:
  - Memory
  - Language
  - Thought
  - Navigation
  - Behavior
  - Personality/Mood
  - Planning and Organizing
Irreversible types of dementia

- Alzheimer's disease: the most common type
- Over 70% of people with dementia have Alzheimer’s disease
Mild Cognitive Impairment

- Severe enough to show up on tests
- Not severe enough to affect daily life
- Increases risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease
What is Alzheimer’s disease?

Alzheimer’s disease:

- is a brain disorder
- is a progressive disease
- is the most common form of dementia
- has no cure
- is eventually fatal
- has been diagnosed in over 5 million Americans
How the brain works

- There are 100 billion nerve cells, or neurons, creating a branching network
- Signals traveling through the neuron forest form memories, thoughts and feelings
- Alzheimer’s disease destroys neurons
Which functions are affected?

- Language, sense of temperature, touch, pain
- Judgment, reasoning
- Memory, language, hearing
- Movement, balance
- Basic functions, including breathing
- Vision

Basic functions, including breathing
Brain functioning affects memory

Kitty’s husband, Bill, has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease
Major risk factors

- The primary risk factor is age
- The incidence is higher in women due to women living longer
- Down syndrome is correlated with Alzheimer’s
- Family history can increase risk
- There are two categories of genes

Estimated percentage of Americans over age 71 with dementia
Selecting a doctor

- Doctors can diagnosis Alzheimer’s disease with accuracy
- Choose from:
  - Regular primary care physician
  - Geriatrician
  - Neurologist
  - Psychiatrist
  - Neuropsychologist
Preparing for the doctor’s visit

- Keep a symptom log
  - Write a list of symptoms, be specific
  - Include when, how often and where
  - Develop the list with input from other family members
- List current and previous health problems
- Bring all medications (prescriptions, vitamins, herbal supplements and over the counter medication)
When the diagnosis is Alzheimer’s disease...
Emotions run high

shock

fear

grief

anger

denial

confusion

guilt

worry

acceptance

relief
Stages of Alzheimer’s disease

- Early Stage
- Middle Stage
- Late Stage
Plan early

Monica Parker, MD, is a Geriatric Medicine specialist at Emory University
Plan early

- Be an active partner in your long-term care plan
- Develop a relationship with your healthcare team
- Get legal and financial issues in order
- Grow a support system
- Educate yourself about the disease
Medications to treat symptoms

Ron Petersen, MD, is Director of the Mayo Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center
Clinical research studies

- Clinical trials fuel progress toward treatments
- Participants receive a high standard of care
Programs and services

- Educational programs for families and professionals
- 24-hour Helpline
- Information and Referral
- Care Consultations
- Support Groups
- Online Community
- Safety Services
Make a difference!
Betsy’s husband, John, has a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease
Contact us!

- When Alzheimer’s disease touches your life turn to us
- Nationwide 24-hour Helpline
  - Whether you need information or just want to talk, call us at 1.800.272.3900
- [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)
  - Our award-winning Web site is a rich resource of evidence-based content
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