Maintaining your Memory

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2nd Interprofessional Health Care Symposium:
Resources for a Healthier Longer Life
No Conflicts to Declare
A common older adult challenge is changes in memory

- it is common for older adults to experience memory lapses, e.g., in being able to recall names
- this is part of normal aging
With age it is normal to

• Experience some memory failures/need to look things up

• Be less able to attend to several things at once

• Take longer to learn new material

• Need to write things down
Part of the reason for feeling concerned is the worry that one is on the path to dementia

- at age 65, lifetime risk of developing dementia is 22% for women and 14% for men

Framingham study, Seshadri & Wolf, 2007
## Normal Memory Problems Versus Dementia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Dementia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forgetting where you put your checkbook</td>
<td>Forgetting which bank your money is in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting lost in an unfamiliar place</td>
<td>Getting lost in your own neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgetting where you parked your car in a shopping mall lot</td>
<td>Forgetting that you drove to the shopping mall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dementia defined: Is it dementia or is it Alzheimer’s disease?

- Dementia is a term that defines a group of disorders
- Decline in memory, language, judgment and reasoning, sufficient to interfere with daily, social and occupational functioning
- The 2 main causes of dementia are Alzheimer disease and stroke
Reversible causes of problematic memory changes

• Side effects of medication
• B12 deficiency
• Untreated infection
• Depression

This is why it is important to seek assessment
Evidence-based recommendations for lessening memory lapses and maintaining cognitive health as we age
Three Phases of Memory

• **Learning**: Placing information into the mind for the first time
• **Retention**: Storage
• **Recall**: Finding information in long term memory
Types of Memory

- Explicit Memory
- Prospective Memory
- Procedural Memory
Memory Strategies

• Pay attention
• Repeat new information
• Create stories or rhymes or associations
• Chunk
• Remember the number of things that you need to remember
Memory Extenders

• Calendar
• To-do lists
• Post-its
• Put things in the same place
• Google
• Collaborative memory
Established risk factors for Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias

and also for poorer memory among those aging normally
Sources of evidence about risk and protective factors for dementia

• Longitudinal studies that correlate cognitive performance in old age with lifestyle factors measured earlier

• Epidemiological studies comparing dementia patients to normal controls

• Discordant twin pairs

• Clinical trials testing whether cognition is improved (or rate of decline reduced) in those receiving a specific agent
APOE4 gene  
Low education  
Hearing loss  
Hypertension  
Obesity  
Smoking  
Depression  
Physical inactivity  
Social isolation  
Diabetes  

Poor early nutrition  
Traumatic brain injury  
Anxiety  
Low engagement  
Poor diet
Blood Pressure and Dementia

For every one person with normal midlife blood pressure who develops AD or dementia…

On average, three and a half times as many people with midlife untreated hypertension develop AD or dementia.

Midlife Overweight and Obesity and Dementia

For every one person with normal range weight in midlife who develops AD or dementia...

On average, two times as many overweight and three and a half times as many obese people develop AD or dementia.

Diabetes mellitus and Dementia

For every one person without diabetes who develops AD or dementia….

On average, two and a half times as many people with diabetes in midlife develop AD or dementia.

** SOURCES: **
HAAS (Honolulu Asian Aging Study): Akomolafe et al 2006; Korf et al 2006;
Swedish Twin studies: Xu et al 2009
For every one person with midlife physical inactivity who develops AD or dementia…

On average, one half of one person who is physically active develops AD or dementia.

SOURCES: Hamer & Chida 2008 meta-analysis; Swedish twin studies: Andel et al 2008; Cleveland Clinic: Smith et al 2014
Mediterranean diet is protective against cognitive impairment and dementia

- Eating primarily plant-based foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts
- Replacing butter with healthy fats, such as olive oil; using low fat dairy
- Using herbs and spices instead of salt to flavor foods
- Limiting red meat to no more than a few times a month
- Eating fish and poultry at least twice a week
- Drinking red wine in moderation (optional)
An engaged lifestyle is protective against cognitive impairment and dementia

- Greater midlife participation in intellectual/cultural activities is protective against cognitive impairment, especially for women.
- People who report being lonely have an increased risk of developing AD and show lower cognitive function over the lifespan.
- Productive engagement leads to improved memory compared with usual social activities.
Summary

There are things that people can do to maintain memory and brain health with age, and to reduce risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease
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