

# HEALTH LITERACY MODULE

## Awareness of Demans-Alzheimer

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# Dementia

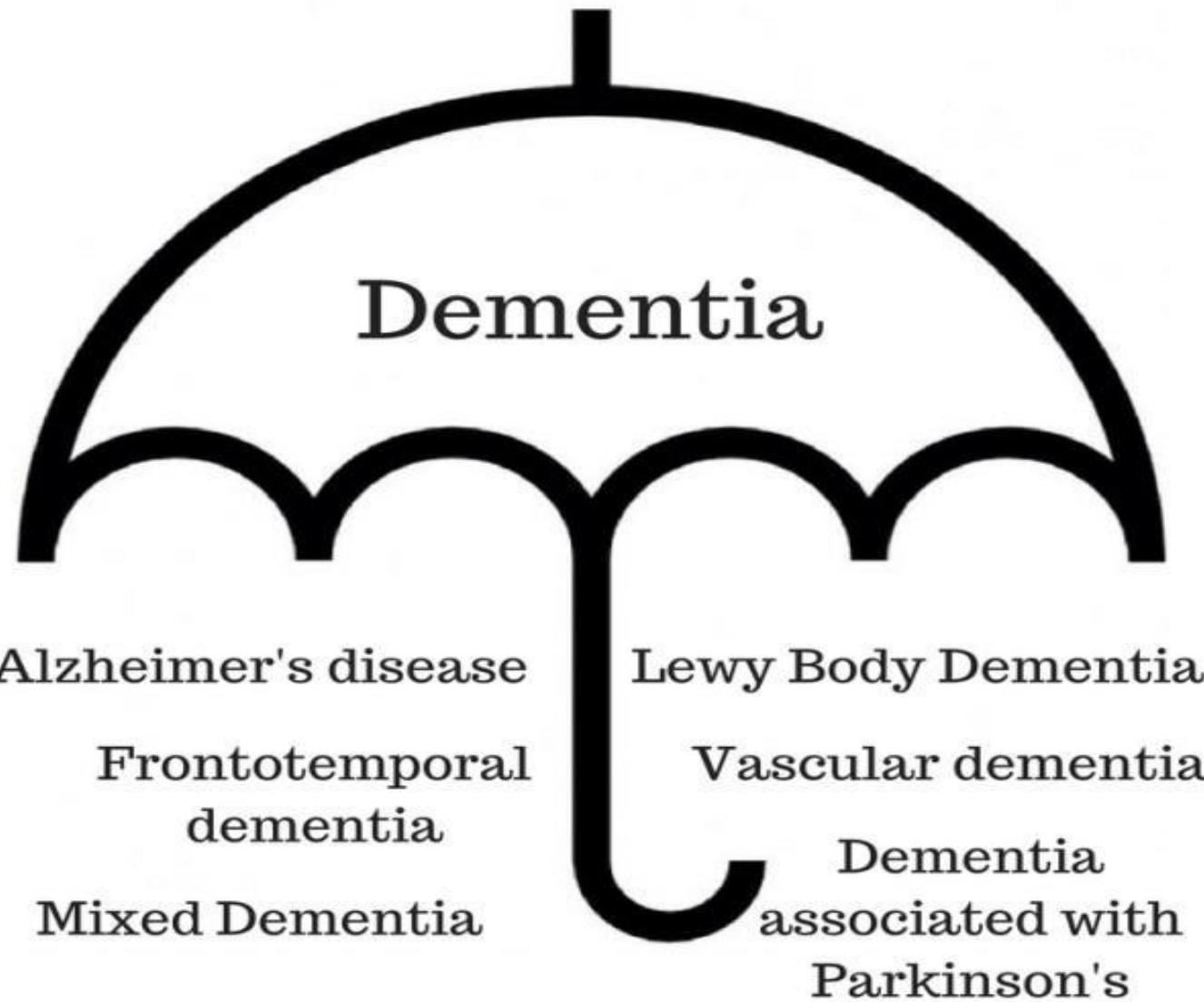
- Although dementia mainly affects older people, it is not a normal part of ageing.
- Worldwide, around 50 million people have dementia, and there are nearly 10 million new cases every year.
- Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia and may contribute to 60–70% of cases.
- Dementia is one of the major causes of disability and dependency among older people worldwide.
- Dementia has a physical, psychological, social, and economic impact, not only on people with dementia, but also on their carers, families and society at large.

# Dementia (Definition)

- **Dementia is a term used to describe a group of symptoms affecting memory, thinking and social abilities severely enough to interfere with your daily life. It isn't a specific disease, but several diseases can cause dementia.**
- **Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of a progressive dementia in older adults, but there are a number of other causes of dementia. Depending on the cause, some dementia symptoms might be reversible.**

# Dementia-like conditions that can be reversed

- Infections and immune disorders.
- Metabolic problems and endocrine abnormalities..
- Nutritional deficiencies.
- Medication side effects.
- Subdural hematomas.
- Brain tumors.
- Normal-pressure hydrocephalus.



# Cognitive Changes

- **Memory loss, which is usually noticed by someone else**
- **Difficulty communicating or finding words**
- **Difficulty with visual and spatial abilities, such as getting lost while driving**
- **Difficulty reasoning or problem-solving**
- **Difficulty handling complex tasks**
- **Difficulty with planning and organizing**
- **Difficulty with coordination and motor functions**
- **Confusion and disorientation**

# Psychological changes

- **Personality changes**
- **Depression**
- **Anxiety**
- **Inappropriate behavior**
- **Paranoia**
- **Agitation**
- **Hallucinations**



# Complications

Dementia can affect many body systems and, therefore, the ability to function. Dementia can lead to:

- **Poor nutrition.** Many people with dementia eventually reduce or stop eating, affecting their nutrient intake. Ultimately, they may be unable to chew and swallow.
- **Pneumonia.** Difficulty swallowing increases the risk of choking or aspirating food into the lungs, which can block breathing and cause pneumonia.
- **Inability to perform self-care tasks.** As dementia progresses, it can interfere with bathing, dressing, brushing hair or teeth, using the toilet independently, and taking medications as directed.
- **Personal safety challenges.** Some day-to-day situations can present safety issues for people with dementia, including driving, cooking, and walking and living alone.
- **Death.** Late-stage dementia results in coma and death, often from infection.

# Alzheimer's disease

## **This is the most common cause of dementia(%60-70)**

- Although not all causes of Alzheimer's disease are known, experts do know that a small percentage are related to mutations of three genes, which can be passed down from parent to child. While several genes are probably involved in Alzheimer's disease, one important gene that increases risk is apolipoprotein E4 (APOE).
- Alzheimer's disease patients have plaques and tangles in their brains. Plaques are clumps of a protein called beta-amyloid, and tangles are fibrous tangles made up of tau protein. It's thought that these clumps damage healthy neurons and the fibers connecting them.

# Risk factors

- **Age.** Your risk for Alzheimer's goes up as you get older. For most people, it starts going up after age 65.
- **Gender.** Women get the disease more often than men.
- **Genetic factors.** ApoE4+
- **Family history.** People who have a parent or sibling with Alzheimer's are more likely to get it themselves.
- **Down syndrom.** It's not clear why, but people with this disorder often get Alzheimer's disease in their 30s and 40s.
- **Head injury.** Some studies have shown a link between Alzheimer's disease and a major head injury.
- **Drugs**
- **Depression**
- **Other factors.** High cholesterol levels and high blood pressure may also raise your risk.

# Diagnosis

- **Neurological and physical examination**
- **Lab tests, EKG, chest X-ray**
- **Brain scans: CT, MRI, PET**
- **EEG(?)**
- **Psychiatric evaluation**
- **Neuropsychological tests for mental status and cognitive functioning**

# Medications

- The following are used to temporarily improve dementia symptoms.
- **Cholinesterase inhibitors.**

Although primarily used to treat Alzheimer's disease, these medications might also be prescribed for other dementias, including vascular dementia, Parkinson's disease dementia and Lewy body dementia.

Side effects can include nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Other possible side effects include slowed heart rate, fainting and sleep disturbances.

- **Memantine.**

A common side effect of memantine is dizziness.

- **Other medications.** Your doctor might prescribe medications to treat other symptoms or conditions, such as depression, sleep disturbances, hallucinations, parkinsonism or agitation.

# Therapies

Several dementia symptoms and behavior problems might be treated initially using nondrug approaches, such as:

**Occupational therapy, Modifying the environment, Simplifying tasks.**

## Other therapies

- Music therapy, which involves listening to soothing music
- Light exercise
- Watching videos of family members
- Pet therapy, which involves use of animals, such as visits from dogs, to promote improved moods and behaviors in people with dementia
- Aromatherapy, which uses fragrant plant oils
- Massage therapy
- Art therapy, which involves creating art, focusing on the process rather than the outcome

# Genetic testing for Alzheimer's disease

- There are some markers in the cerebrospinal fluid and blood
- Caring for those at familial risk, being cared for at a younger age
- But it doesn't give final results, it gives a percentage of the probability
- Preventive treatment in this case is not yet available

# Prevention

- **Keep your mind active.**
- **Be physically and socially active.**
- **Quit smoking.**
- **Get enough vitamins.**
- **Manage cardiovascular risk factors.**
- **Treat health conditions.**
- **Maintain a healthy diet.**
- **Get good-quality sleep.**
- **Treat hearing problems.**



# Care and support for the person with the disease

- Learn about memory loss, dementia and Alzheimer's disease.
- Write about your feelings in a journal.
- Join a local support group.
- Get individual or family counseling.
- Talk to a member of your spiritual community or another person who can help you with your spiritual needs.
- Stay active and involved, volunteer, exercise, and participate in activities for people with memory loss.
- Spend time with friends and family.
- Participate in an online community of people who are having similar experiences.
- Find new ways to express yourself, such as through painting, singing or writing.
- Delegate help with decision-making to someone you trust.

# Support for caregivers and care partners

Providing care for someone with dementia is physically and emotionally demanding. Feelings of anger and guilt, frustration and discouragement, worry, grief, and social isolation are common. If you're a caregiver or care partner for someone with dementia:

- Learn about the disease and participate in caregiver education programs
- Find out about supportive services in your community, such as respite care or adult care, which can give you a break from caregiving at scheduled times during the week
- Ask friends or other family members for help
- Take care of your physical, emotional and spiritual health
- Ask questions of doctors, social workers and others involved in the care of your loved one
- Join a support group

# References

**1-Hazzard's Geriatric Medicine and Gerontology, Seventh Edition 7th Edition, McGraw Hill Medical Books.**

**2- Current Diagnosis and Treatment: Geriatrics, 3/e (Current Geriatric Diagnosis and Treatment) 3rd Edition**



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## Partners

