

THE GUIDED LIGHT

LA CROSSE COUNTY DEMENTIA NEWSLETTER FOR HOPE, SUPPORT, RESOURCES

More than Alzheimer's Disease: Exploring Other Dementias

As we age, it's normal to lose some neurons (nerve cells) in the brain. However, when people experience greater loss that impact their ability to function in everyday activities it is dementia, which is not normal aging. Dementia is the general name for a decline in cognitive abilities that impacts a person's ability to do everyday activities. In irreversible dementias, neurons (nerves in the brain) stop working, lose connections with other neurons, and eventually die. At first, symptoms can be mild, but they get worse over time, often being called 'progressive'.

X suggests there are over X different forms of dementia. Alzheimer's Disease being the most common form, attributing to over 70% of the dementias we see. This article will focus on a few of the other related dementias. Read on to learn more about Vascular Dementia, Lewy Body Dementia and Frontotemporal Dementia.

Content in this edition adapted from National Institutes of Health - Institute on Aging

Early & Accurate Diagnosis

To diagnose dementia, doctors first need to rule out other causes of the symptoms by assessing whether there is a potentially treatable condition. This done with a physical exam to measure blood pressure and other vital signs, lab tests to check levels of chemicals, hormones, and vitamins. Doctors will also review a person's medical and family history and some of the following procedures *may* also be used:

- Cognitive and neurological tests
- Brain Scans (CT, MRI, PET)
- Psychiatric evaluation
- Genetic tests
- Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) tests

While there are no cures, early diagnosis does allow for the opportunity to learn coping strategies for behavioral symptoms and become familiar with community supports. It's also important to know what underlying disease is causing your symptoms because some medications used for symptoms may be more or less effective, worsen the symptoms or be life threatening.



Benefits of Early Detection

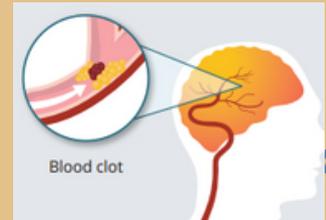
- Plan for future care needs by engaging person with dementia in the planning and decision making process
- Take care of legal and financial matters
- Address safety early
- Learn about living arrangements and in home supports
- Develop support networks
- Participate in clinical trials or research
- Learn about the condition and what to expect

Vascular Dementia

Vascular dementia refers to changes to memory, thinking, and behavior resulting from conditions that affect the blood vessels in the brain. Cognition and brain function can be significantly affected by the size, location, and number of vascular changes. Vascular dementia is caused by conditions like stroke, thickening blood vessel walls, thinning white matter, narrowing arteries, high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol, head trauma; all of which damage blood vessels in the brain or interrupt the flow of blood and oxygen to the brain.

Symptoms of vascular dementia can begin gradually or can occur suddenly, and then progress over time, with possible short periods of improvement. Vascular dementia can occur alone or be a part of a different diagnosis such as Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia. When an individual is diagnosed with vascular dementia, their symptoms can be similar to the symptoms of Alzheimer's. Because many different disease processes can result in different forms of vascular dementia, there may not be one treatment for all. However, it is often managed with medications to prevent strokes and reduce the risk of additional brain damage.

What's happening in the brain?



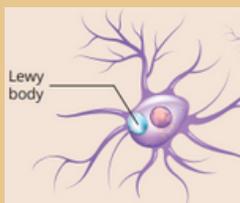
Conditions, such as blood clots, disrupt blood flow in the brain

Lewy Body Dementia (LBD)

LBD) is a disease associated with abnormal deposits of a protein in the brain. These deposits, called Lewy bodies, affect brain chemicals (Acetylcholine and Dopamine) and lead to problems with thinking, learning, movement, mood and behavior. LBD is one of the most common causes of dementia. People typically show symptoms at age 50 or older and typically affect more men. Risk factors for LBD include certain diseases and health conditions, particularly Parkinson's disease and REM sleep behavior disorder. Having a family member with LBD also may increase a person's risk and having certain gene variants (APOE, SNCA, and GBA) have been associated with increased risk. LBD refers to two related diagnoses: dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB) and Parkinson's disease dementia. Both diagnoses have the same underlying changes in the brain and, over time, people with either diagnosis develop similar symptoms. The difference is in the timing of cognitive and movement symptoms. Symptoms of LBD include unpredictable changes in concentration, attention, alertness, and wakefulness, disorganized, unclear, or illogical thought, movement problems, sleep disruptions, restless leg syndrome, depression, apathy (lack of interest), anxiety, agitation, visual hallucinations, delusions and paranoia. People with LBD can also experience autonomic nervous system changes like irregular body temps, Dizziness or fainting, Sensitivity to heat and cold, poor sense of smell. In early stages of LBD Memory is often not impacted.

LBD is irreversible; currently there are no treatments that slow or reverse the disease progression. There are many non-pharmacological approaches to LBD daily care, emotional and social support that are effective in LBD management. In addition, several medications used. However, it's important to work with a knowledgeable health professional because certain medications can make some symptoms worse in LBD.

What's happening?



Abnormal deposits of protein affect the brain's chemical messengers

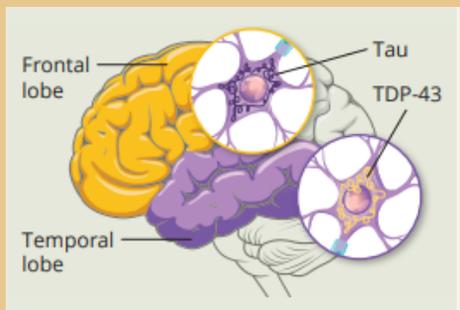
Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD)



FTD is the result of damage to neurons in the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain. FTD is rare and tends to occur at a younger age than other forms of dementia. Roughly 60% of people with FTD are 45 to 64 years old.

The frontal lobe is located at the front of your head and is responsible for language, speech, rational and logical thinking, the ability to make sense of things, making decisions and considering facts. Also involved with more creative functions, like imagination, curiosity and intuition.

What's happening in the brain?



Abnormal amounts or forms of tau and TDP-43 proteins accumulate inside neurons in the frontal and temporal lobes.



The temporal lobes are located above both ears and responsible for perceiving audio, producing speech, managing memories and organizing sensory inputs. Impairment to these lobes result in varying symptoms, including unusual behaviors, emotional problems, trouble communicating, difficulty with work, or difficulty with walking. Symptoms of FTD are often misunderstood. Family members and friends may think that a person is misbehaving, leading to anger and conflict. It is important to understand that people with these disorders cannot control their behaviors and lack any awareness of their illness.

There are three types FTD: behavioral variant frontotemporal dementia (bvFTD), primary progressive aphasia (PPA), and movement disorders.

So far, there is no cure for FTD and no way to slow down or prevent these diseases. However, there are ways to manage symptoms. Medications are available. Antidepressants called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors are commonly prescribed to treat social disinhibition and impulsive behavior. People with aggression or delusions sometimes take low doses of antipsychotic medications. Treatment for language impairments has two goals: maintaining language skills and using new tools and other ways to communicate; such as communication devices, lists, slowing things down and talking clearly. Medications and physical and occupational therapy may provide modest relief for the movement symptoms. Non-pharmacological approaches including assessing communication, interactions, environment, schedules are effective for day-to-day symptom management and increasing quality of life.

Caregiver Wellness Tip



Try to not let your loved one's illness always take center stage. Caregiving can be one of many aspects of your life. In order to allow time for yourself regularly, it may be necessary to have help in caring for your loved one. Respite (taking a break) is essential. Dementia is a marathon, not a sprint. People with dementia can live years with their illness so take the time you need to be there yourself on the journey.

Want more? Check out a Teepa Snow DVD from the ADRC

Several Titles to choose from: Frontotemporal Dementias, Challenging Behaviors in Dementia Care, It's All In Your Approach, Understanding Lewy Body, Vascular Dementia and more!

Call 608-785-5700

UPCOMING SUPPORT & EDUCATION

July - August - September 2023

MONDAYS

- OASIS Day Respite Weekly 9-11am *Must pre-register 608-780-0471
- Coffee Connect Support – All Stages 10am virtual 608-386-0767 for link
- Club Connectivity - Early diagnosis/MCI & Caregivers 608-519-2088 Once/month
- Parkinson's Disease Support Group 1st Mon/Month 5-6:30pm Black River Beach Questions: 608-789-8640
- Caregiver Education Hour 608-785-5700 Aug.10, 9:30am Safety & Pre-Crisis Planning Sept. 21 - location and topic TBD

TUESDAYS

- Caregiver Support – All Stages 608-386-8908 2nd Tuesday/month 1:15-3pm GoodShepard
- ALS Care Connections Support 1st Tues. 4-5:30pm, Questions: 608-461-2905
- Brain & Body Fitness – Early Stages/MCI Begins Aug 22 La Crosse YMCA *Must Pre-register 608-785-5700
- Conversations with Kathy – 4th Tues. 1:15-2:30 Caregiver Camaraderie. 608-386-8908 LaCrosse YMCA Healthy Living Cntr

WEDNESDAYS

- Connect Smart PWD&Caregiver 608-519-2088. 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 12:30pm-2pm
- SPARK! at Clearwater Farm Onalaska 3rd Wed/Month, 10:30am-12 608-385-4819
- Grief Support & Education @Community Connections 608-519-2088 July 12 & August 9, 10-11:30am

THURSDAYS

- OASIS Day Respite Weekly 11am-3pm *Must pre-register 608-780-0471
- Kinship4Caregivers - Launching Sept!
- Dementia Friendly Coalition – 608-386-0767 1st Thurs. 1-2:30pm virtual and in-person

FRIDAYS

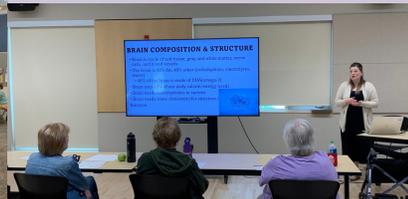
- Giving Hearts Choir – All Stages, Caregivers, Friends. Call Ruth 608-792-8608 10am North Presbyterian La Crosse
- Brain & Body Fitness – Early Stages/MCI Begins Aug 25 OnalaskaYMCA *Register 608-785-5700

Other Events

- Dementia Live - For Caregivers July 20th 1:30-2:30, call 608-785-5700 to register
- Walk to End Alzheimer's - Sept. 16th 10am Riverside Park. Register 414-296-5102
- Caregiver Cruise - Sept 16, 1:30pm Mississippi Queen - Riverside Park, Free! 608-785-5700



Dementia Awareness Month was a success! Thank you to all who helped plan, coordinate and promote the activities. Especially grateful for the site space donations and agencies that donated for prizes and refreshments. It was nice to see everyone who joined us! Below are a few pictures of the fun! Don't forget to follow the coalition on Facebook to stay connected.



Sign up for a copy of this newsletter: 608-785-5700