



Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia: What Do We Do Know?

Alzheimer's disease remains a mystery for to healthcare professionals and research scientists alike. We are not sure what causes the disease or how to prevent it. Most likely, there is not one single cause, but several factors that affect each person differently. Age is the most important known risk factor.

In a published article on the topic, Planned Elderhood authors write, "The number of people with the disease doubles every 5 years beyond age 65. Family history is another risk factor. Scientists believe that genetics may play a role in many AD cases. Alzheimer's is diagnosed through a series of tests that eliminate all other medical possibilities for memory loss. "The symptoms of AD start slowly. At first, the only symptom may be mild forgetfulness. People with AD may have trouble remembering recent events, activities, or the names of familiar people or things. Simple math problems may become hard to solve. Such difficulties may be a bother, but usually do not cause a major lifestyle change. However, as the disease goes on, symptoms are more easily noticed and become serious enough to cause people with AD or their family members to seek medical help.

"For example, people in the later 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 begin to have problems speaking, understanding, reading, or writing. They are at risk for serious injury in an unsafe environment. Later on, people with AD may become anxious or aggressive, or wander away from home. Eventually, patients need total care. It is recommended that when the diagnosis of AD or dementia is made that a power of attorney for healthcare and property be appointed to handle the asset's and healthcare needs. This allows the designated individual to handle all the healthcare and financial decisions when AD progresses. "Dementia related diseases of any kind (including Alzheimer's Disease) have a devastating effect not only on the victim but the family as well. Although all caregivers have good intentions, nursing



home placement, in most cases, is an inevitable conclusion. Many nursing homes provide specialized AD programming to help the resident maintain the best possible quality of life. The staff on these "specialized units" has been specially trained to handle the behavioral problems this disease presents. This allows the family to enjoy their time together without stressing over all the issues this disease brings."

When you find yourself trying to deal with the challenges that Alzheimer's Disease can bring to your family, keep in mind that there are many support groups available to you along with the expert financial planning advice that can keep you from making costly mistakes in the face of these trying times. We can help. Contact us today for more information.

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