

Alzheimer's disease: Early detection is the key

ON THE OCCASION of World Alzheimer's Day on 21 September, I take this opportunity to write a few lines about Alzheimer's disease. This article is in continuation of my earlier article about 'World Alzheimer's Day: Let us remember those who cannot remember,' to spread awareness in the community with regards to Alzheimer's disease, one of the most neglected areas in the care of the elderly in India. There is hardly any government initiative to take care of dementia patients and there are only two NGO's in the whole country to address the problem of dementia nationally viz. Alzheimer's & Related Disorders Society of India (ARDSI) and Dignity Foundation.

As you know there is no treatment that can cure Alzheimer's disease, but there are drugs, therapies and care that can make the patient stable and give caregivers some respite. Here I would like to mention that early diagnosis of Alzheimer's can help to make life easy and if we know the warning signs for Alzheimer's disease, then we can identify it at an early stage.

Following are some of the warning signs for Alzheimer's disease:

Memory loss: Forgetting recently learnt information is one of the most common early signs of dementia. A person begins to forget more often and is unable to recall the information later.

Difficulty in performing familiar tasks: People with dementia often find it hard to plan or complete everyday tasks. Individuals may lose track of the steps involved in preparing a meal, placing a telephone call or playing a game.

Problems with language: People with Alzheimer's disease often forget simple words or substitute unusual words, making their speech or writing hard to understand. They may be unable to find the toothbrush, for example, and instead ask for "that thing for my mouth."

Disorientation with regards to time and place: People with Alzheimer's disease can become lost in their own neighborhood, forget where they are and how they got there, and not know how to get back home.

Poor or decreased judgment: Those with Alzheimer's may dress inappropriately, wearing several layers on a warm day or little clothing in the cold. They may show poor judgment, like giving away large sums of money to telemarketers. They find difficulty to take decisions.

Problems with abstract thinking: Someone with Alzheimer's disease may have unusual difficulty performing complex mental tasks, like forgetting what numbers are for and how they should be used.

Misplacing things: A person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in unusual places: an iron in the freezer or a wristwatch in the sugar bowl.

Changes in mood or behaviour: Someone with Alzheimer's disease may show rapid mood swings – from calm to tears to anger – for no apparent reason.

Changes in personality: The personalities of people with dementia can change dramatically. They may become extremely confused, suspicious, fearful or dependent on a family member. They sometime go to their teens, and may call their wife as mother.

Loss of initiative: A person with Alzheimer's disease may become very passive, sitting in front of the TV for hours, sleeping more than usual or not wanting to do usual activities.

These are a few warning signs, which if you find in yourself or a loved one, consult a doctor at the earliest. Early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or other disorders causing dementia is an important step to getting appropriate treatment, care and support services.

So there's no time to lose. Start looking for early signs of Alzheimer's disease and do yourself and your loved ones a favour.

By Sailesh Mishra

Source and Courtesy:

<http://www.merineews.com/catFull.jsp?articleID=126499&catID=2&category=India>