

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/brothers/365790_joyce618.html

Test your knowledge of Alzheimer's disease

Last updated June 17, 2008 10:08 a.m. PT

By DR. JOYCE BROTHERS

Alzheimer's disease affects about 24 million people worldwide. Because of the nature of the disease, caregivers play a very important role, and it is essential for people to understand this role. This quiz will test your knowledge of Alzheimer's disease itself, as well as some of the challenges that caregivers face in dealing with this devastating disease.

1. Alzheimer's is curable, and the causes and progression of the disease are well understood by scientists, so that people diagnosed with the disease can expect to fully recover.

TRUE () FALSE ()

2. Effective and compassionate caregiving is an essential part of dealing with Alzheimer's disease.

TRUE () FALSE ()

3. Respite care is a short-term solution that should be used sparingly or avoided altogether, since it can interrupt the family bond that is created with caregivers.

TRUE () FALSE ()

4. It is normal for caregivers of those suffering from Alzheimer's to experience high levels of stress and depression.

TRUE () FALSE ()

5. Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia affecting older people, and it involves the parts of the brain that control memory and thought, as well as language.

TRUE () FALSE ()

6. The best way to make Alzheimer's patients comfortable and help them maintain normalcy is to continually vary their routines, and change their living environment so they are subject to constant memory stimulation.

TRUE () FALSE ()

7. People with Alzheimer's can experience behavioral changes, such as withdrawal from social interactions or mood swings and personality changes, but keeping them involved with loved ones and familiar activities can make them feel more comfortable.

TRUE () FALSE ()

ANSWERS:

1. FALSE. Alzheimer's is, at this point, still incurable and degenerative. No treatment has yet been found that controls or reverses the course of the disease, primarily because scientists still don't understand the causes and progression of the disease.

2. TRUE. An Alzheimer's patient eventually is unable to care for him- or herself, so care management is essential. If your loved one is affected by Alzheimer's, allowing him or her to continue to live at home in familiar surroundings with familiar people may delay the onset of some symptoms. This also can delay the need for costly professional care.

3. FALSE. While respite care is indeed short-term, it is an essential part of the overall support system that a caregiver or family can use. This can help a family take a break from the stress and frustration associated with simple daily tasks, and will help the family cope with the difficult task of caring for their loved one.

4. TRUE. Caregivers have huge demands placed on their time and concentration, and generally receive little in the way of gratitude from the loved one they are caring for. This can make it very difficult to maintain a healthy and happy outlook while in a caregiving role. Alzheimer's patients also can become both physically and verbally abusive, which can put both parties at risk.

5. TRUE. Advancing age is the main risk factor for this disease. It can begin as mild forgetfulness, which often is mistaken for normal age-related memory changes.

6. FALSE. Simplified and constant routines are the best way to help patients with the tasks of day-to-day life. Changes in these routines, or in their living environments, can make those suffering from Alzheimer's very agitated and uncomfortable.

7. TRUE. Alzheimer's is more complicated than just memory loss, and it can be hard to deal

with unexpected behavior of people you are close to. Remember to be patient and kind, and try to understand what they are going through.

If you were able to answer five of the seven questions correctly, you are more informed than most on this subject.

*Write to Dr. Joyce
Brothers via King
Features, 888 Seventh
Ave., New York, NY
10019.*

*© 1998-2008 Seattle
Post-Intelligencer*