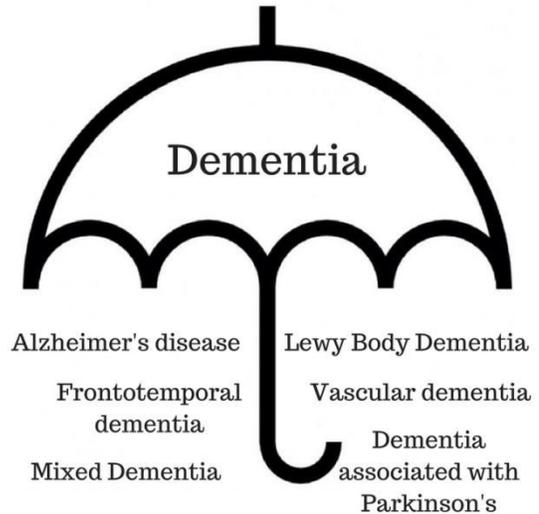


Basics of Alzheimer's disease

By: Amy Sobrino, MSW

One of the most frequent questions I receive from families, caregivers, or person with memory loss is “What is the difference between dementia and Alzheimer's disease?” This concept can be a little confusing, especially in the midst of a recent diagnosis. In honor of National Alzheimer's Awareness month, I'd like to take some time to explain this question, as well as go into some basic information about Alzheimer's disease.

Think of dementia as an “umbrella word”. Dementia itself describes a set of symptoms (memory loss, confusion, judgment impairment, cognition challenges, etc.). Under the “umbrella” of dementia, there are many different types or forms of dementia. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, making up over 60% of all dementia diagnoses. Some other common forms of dementia include Lewy Body Dementia, Frontotemporal Dementia, Mixed Dementia, Vascular Dementia, and Dementia associated with Parkinson's disease.



Alzheimer's is a progressive dementia, meaning that a person's functioning declines over a number of years. Although the disease is highly individual, on average, Alzheimer's can last between 10-12 years.

Alzheimer's itself has several key warning signs/symptoms that a person may notice in the early stages of the disease before diagnosis. Close family and friends may also notice some of these symptoms and encourage their loved one to see guidance from their physician or a specialist such a neurologist or geriatrician. Although Alzheimer's disease affects each person individually, there is a common set of warning signs. If you or a loved one are experiencing any of the warning signs below, it is a good time to see a specialist to determine a specific diagnosis.

- Changes in mood and/or personality
- Memory loss that interferes with daily life
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks
- Withdrawal from regular activities
- Impaired judgment

- Challenges in planning or solving problems
- Difficulty with language
- Delayed processing time
- Communication deficits
- Confusion
- Difficulty with math and finances

Adapted from Alzheimer's Association Know the 10 Signs of Alzheimer's

For more information about Memory Moment articles & Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness, check out their website at www.effinghamalz.org. If you are a caregiver & have specific questions or situations you would like information on, please feel free to call Shannon Nosbisch at 217-663-0010 or Amy Sobrino at 618-363-8372.