Memory Slips May Signal Increased Risk of Dementia Later in Life

New research published in an online issue of *Neurology* suggests that individuals without dementia who begin reporting memory issues may be more likely to develop dementia later, even if they have no clinical signs of the disease.

For the study, 531 individuals (average age = 73) free of dementia were asked yearly if they noticed any changes in their memory. They were also given annual memory and thinking tests for an average of 10 years. After death, 243 participants’ brains were examined for evidence of Alzheimer’s disease.

Fifty-six percent of participants reported changes in their memory at an average age of 82. The study found that those who reported memory complaints were approximately three times more likely to develop memory and thinking problems.

Approximately one in six participants developed dementia during the study, and 80% of those individuals first reported memory changes.


Anxiety, Moodiness, Distress Linked to Higher Risk of Alzheimer’s in Women

Women who are anxious, jealous, or moody and distressed in middle age may be at a higher risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease (AD) later in life, according to a study published in an online issue of *Neurology*.

For the study, 800 women (average age = 46) were followed for 38 years and given personality tests that evaluated their level of neuroticism and extraversion or introversion. They were also given memory tests.

The women were also asked if they had experienced any period of stress that lasted 1 month or longer in their work, health, or family situation. Stress referred to feelings of irritability, tension, nervousness, fear, anxiety, or sleep disturbances. Responses were categorized on a scale from 0 (never experiencing any period of stress) to 5 (experiencing constant stress during the last 5 years). Women who chose responses from 3 and higher were considered to have distress.

Of the participants, 19% developed dementia. The study found that women who scored highest on the tests for neuroticism had double the risk of developing dementia compared to those who scored lowest on the tests. However, the link depended on long-standing stress.

Being either withdrawn or outgoing did not appear to increase dementia risk alone; however, women who were both easily distressed and withdrawn experienced the highest risk of AD in the study. A total of 16 (25%) of the 63 women who were easily distressed and withdrawn developed AD, compared to eight (13%) of the 64 individuals who were not easily distressed and were outgoing.


Memory Loss Associated With Alzheimer’s May Be Reversed

Memory loss in patients may be reversed, and improvement may be sustained, according to a study published online in the journal *Aging*.

Researchers used a complex, 36-point therapeutic program that involved comprehensive diet changes, brain stimulation, exercise, sleep optimization, specific pharmaceutical agents and vitamins, and multiple additional steps that affect brain chemistry.
Treatment was personalized for each patient based on extensive testing to determine what was affecting the brain’s plasticity signaling network.

Nine of 10 participants displayed subjective or objective improvement in their memories beginning within 3 to 6 months. In addition, approximately 12% reported often having trouble falling asleep, 30% indicated they regularly had problems with waking up during the night, and 13% reported problems with waking up too early and not being able to fall asleep again most of the time.

The actigraph provided data that showed the average duration of sleep period among the study participants was 7.9 hours, and the average total sleep time was 7.25 hours. This finding indicates that the majority of older adults are getting the recommended amount of sleep and usually not having common sleep problems.

Another unexpected finding was that respondents who reported waking up more frequently during the night had more total sleep time, suggesting that feeling rested may tap into other aspects of older adults’ everyday health or psychological experience.


Study Finds Increase in Nursing Home Infection Rates

New research presented at IDWeek 2014 shows that nursing home infection rates are on the rise.

The study examined infections in U.S. nursing homes over a 5-year period. Researchers analyzed infection prevalence from 2006 to 2010, using data that nursing homes submitted to the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Although urinary tract infections (UTIs) and pneumonia were the most common infections, prevalence increased the most (48%) for viral hepatitis. UTIs, the most common infection in nursing homes, increased in prevalence by

Continued on page 35.
1%; pneumonia climbed in prevalence by 11%; and multidrug resistant organism infection prevalence increased 18%.

More research is needed to determine the exact causes behind the increases in infection prevalence.

Although some nursing homes may only screen residents who are symptomatic or at high risk for infection, routine screening of all residents upon admission is likely to be more effective, researchers said.


Natural Light May Improve Nurses’ Health and Mood

For the health and happiness of nurses—and to ensure the best care of hospital patients—exposure to natural light may be the best medicine, according to research published in *Health Environments Research and Design*.

Letting natural light into the nurses’ workstations offered improved alertness and mood restoration effects.

Researchers also discovered that nurses who had access to natural light had significantly lower blood pressure, communicated more often with their colleagues, laughed more, and served their patients in better moods than nurses who settled for large doses of artificial light.

Past evidence indicates that natural light and views have restorative effects on individuals both physiologically and psychologically, and according to researchers, maximizing access to natural daylight and providing quality lighting design in nursing areas may be an opportunity to improve safety through environmental design and enable staff to manage sleepiness.