

June is Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month!

By: Tara Connor, OTR/L

Worldwide, 50 million people are living with Alzheimer's or some form of dementia. Currently, in America alone, more than 5 million people have Alzheimer's disease and that number is expected to grow to as many as 16 million by 2050. Only last year, my Grandmother lost her life to Alzheimer's disease. It was painful to see the slow deterioration of her health. However, the most awful thing was the feeling of helplessness, not being able to do a thing to slow the progression of this disease. After she passed away, I noticed a shift in some of my family members. Despite an unwavering Irish sense of humor, I noticed my father became much more concerned about the possibilities of his future and questioned the frequency of his forgetfulness. This prompted me to do a bit more research as well.

As an occupational therapist, I've assisted many families with training and education for dementia care management to keep their loved ones safe at home. But I wanted to know more about what the latest and greatest research was saying especially after this touched my family. I quickly found that current research is focusing not only on treatment, but the factors that very well may aide in slowing the process or possibly even preventing Alzheimer's disease altogether. Promising research suggests that you can reduce your risk of Alzheimer's and other dementias through a combination of simple but effective lifestyle changes.

To summarize the vast majority of materials I have read, I will share the six pillars with you!

1. Regular Exercise

Yes, you know I am going to hit on this first! If you tend to live a not so active lifestyle, I know it can be hard to find the motivation if you don't feel well, and it may seem overwhelming to think about how to improve your activity level and maybe incorporate some exercises. But remember, a little exercise is better than none. In fact, adding just modest amounts of physical activity to your weekly routine can have a profound effect on your health. Your therapists can help you to identify exercises that work for you and activities that motivate you. Having a therapist guide you through this journey is beneficial to make sure that you are progressing yourself in a safe way to avoid injury. "It takes about 28 days for a new routine to become habit, so do your best to stick with it for a month and soon your exercise routine will feel natural, even something you miss if you skip a session".

And of course, here are five more equally important factors:

2. Social engagement

3. Healthy diet

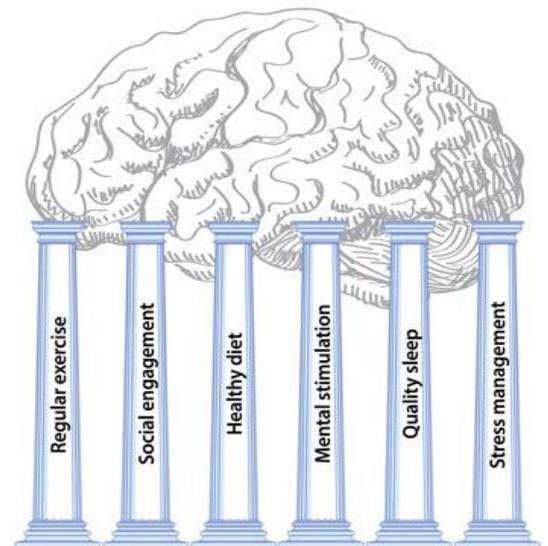
4. Mental stimulation

5. Quality sleep

6. Stress management

Now I know that I have a variant for this disease (thanks to 23 and me) as well as a family history, I am beyond motivated to follow these guidelines and to help others do the same. Even if the research is not yet conclusive, it is never too early or too late to start living a healthy lifestyle!

The 6 Pillars of Alzheimer's Prevention



Arthritis and You

By: Zachary Viers, PTA

Arthritis is a very common disease in which the cartilage or “cushioning” between joints is broken down. This can lead to painful or swollen joints and can affect your everyday life in many ways. There are many types of arthritis, the most common of which is osteoarthritis.

What is osteoarthritis and how do I know I have it?

Osteoarthritis is a degenerative joint disease. Its most commonplace name is “wear and tear” arthritis, characterized by stiff and swollen joints, especially in the morning. It is common to wake up and feel like you can’t move the effected joint, but it begins to feel better as the day goes on. Many factors can contribute to the development of osteoarthritis, but it has no specific cause. A visit with your primary care physician is the only sure method of knowing if you have osteoarthritis. They will perform a physical examination of where you are experiencing pain and can order laboratory test, x-rays, or even magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

What can I do about my arthritis?

Unfortunately, osteoarthritis has no cure. There is no method to regain cartilage that has been affected. Because of this, the main method of treatment is to control pain and symptoms of osteoarthritis. Your physician can prescribe pain medication and you should always consult them before taking any medication for your pain or inflammation. There are also conservative ways to manage osteoarthritis flare ups both short and long term. One of the primary methods of osteoarthritis management sounds counterintuitive: GET MOVING! It may feel like the last thing you want to do when you are swollen and in pain but staying active is one of the best things for arthritis. Don’t worry though, you are not alone. Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy can help!

What can therapy do for me?

Physical Therapists, Physical Therapist Assistants, and Occupational Therapists are specifically trained in managing pain and providing guidance on exercise protocol. They can help you in many ways for your everyday function. They can teach techniques to continue being active even when you are experiencing pain, and how to manage your pain with hot or cold therapies. They can assist you in modifying many daily activities and can show you the proper way to, you guessed it, MOVE! Keeping active is the most important thing you can do for your arthritis and therapists can help you do it safely. A 2005 Ottawa Panel found that general physical activity, resistance training, and massage all provide significant improvements in pain levels and daily function for patients with osteoarthritis. Your first appointment will be with a Physical Therapist who will evaluate your arthritis and conduct any testing necessary such as strength testing, range of motion, assessment of pain levels, and your ability to perform functional tasks. You will set goals and the therapist will establish a plan of care with you to meet those goals. What you do and who you see (your own Physical Therapist or a Physical Therapist Assistant) may vary with each appointment. You can expect the possibility of thermal agents such as hot or cold packs, strengthening activities, stretches, and functional activities you may perform in every day life. One thing is for sure, you will always have a friendly face who cares about your pain and well-being! So, what are you waiting for? Come on in and join the road to less pain and better function!

UPCOMING EVENTS

COME AND JOIN US!!!

- **PARKINSON’S POINTER LECTURE WITH DR. ZOLTAN MARI**
THURSDAY, JUNE 6TH – DOORS OPEN AT 6PM IN B1 ASSEMBLY ROOM
- **PERSONAL BOXING PROGRAM WITH KELLEY GRANT**
EVERY WEDNESDAY – FRIDAY AT 3-5 PM IN B2 OUTPATIENT GYM
- **DANCE FOR PD & CIRCUIT TRAINING CLASS**
NEW CLASSES COMING SOON!!!

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