Memory Issues and Forgetfulness

Rochester Recreation Club for the Deaf

March 25, 2010

Supporters

- Deaf Health Community Committee Members
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- University of Rochester’s Center for Community Health

- Rochester Recreation Club for the Deaf (“REAP”)
Overview

- What is the brain and the higher functions?
- What is considered normal forgetfulness?
- What is dementia?
- Symptoms and signs of dementia and delirium
- Prevention
- Treatments
The Brain

How many neurons are in a brain?
33 billion!

The Brain

- Brain is the center of your nervous system
- Most complex biological structure in body
- Controls all actions of the body
Brain’s Higher Functions

- Memory/Learning
- Language and Math
- Emotional Response
- Social Interaction
- Executive Planning
- Creative Visualization
Memory Loss

- Everyone has experience with memory issues!
  - Examples:
    - Forget someone’s name?
    - Forget to buy a food item at the store?
    - Forget a videophone number?
    - Forget an anniversary or birthday?
    - Forget where you left your car at the parking lot?
    - Forget where you left your keys?
    - Forget to take your medications?
    - Forget your doctor’s appointment?
Memory Loss

• Some forgetfulness or memory loss is normal
• If memory loss is persistent and occurs frequently, it is important to check for other causes of memory losses
“Normal” Memory Loss Causes

- Emotions - upset, depressed, anxious
- Fatigue - feeling tired
- Sick with an infection - “common cold”
- Poor nutrition or hungry
What are signs of dementia?

- Memory loss
- Difficulty communicating
- Cannot learn or remember new information
- Disorganized
- Difficulty with coordination and motor functions
- Personality changes
- Inappropriate behavior
- Paranoia
- Agitation or upset easily
Dementia

- Dementia is not just memory loss
  - 2 or more brain functions are affected

- Are all cases of dementia permanent?
  - No. Some may be corrected.
Risk Factors for Dementia

• Age
• Family history
• Low levels of education
• African-Americans and Hispanics
• Heavy alcohol use
• High blood pressure
• Diabetes
• High cholesterol
• Smoking

* Those who know more than one language have lower rates of dementia

Common Types of Dementia

- Alzheimer’s- most common (60-80%)
  - 1 in 8 people 65 years or older have this
  - 1 in 2 people 85 years or older have this
  - Irreversible and progressive
  - Slow and steady decline

Common Types of Dementia

• **Vascular Dementia** - second most common
  – Usually caused by decreased blood flow to the brain
  – Can be from small strokes or blockages in the arteries
  – Irreversible and progressive
  – Decline varies

Reversible Dementia

- About 10% of dementia are reversible
  - Infections (meningitis or encephalitis)
  - Thyroid issues
  - Nutrition issues (not enough Vitamin B12)
  - Medication side effects
  - Poison from heavy metals (e.g. lead)
  - Drugs or alcohol (for some)

http://www.bing.com/health/article/mayo-119094/Dementia?q=dementia
Common Testing

- Memory and Cognition Tests (checks your brain function)
- Vitamin B12 (checks for levels)
- TSH (checks for thyroid)
- Complete blood count (checks for anemia)
- RPR (checks for syphilis)
- CT/MRI scan of brain (looks at brain structure)
- Glucose (checks for diabetes)
Preventive Strategies

- **Exercise your mind!**
  - Can increase your brain power and efficiency
- **Exercise your body!**
  - Improves blood flow to your brain
- **Healthy diet**
  - Fish (omega 3 fatty acids)
  - Vegetables and fruits
  - Whole grains
  - Plenty of water
Preventive Strategies

- Get enough sleep
- Relaxation - can be done through art work or exercise
- Get organized!
  - Remove clutter and develop a system of where things go
Memory Aids

• Use technology reminders
  – Pager reminders for medications or appointments
• Use small notes to remind you
• When learning a new name or word, think what is different or unique
• Practice!!!
Dementia Strategies

- Prepare for long term care
  - Families and friends
  - Health care staff and nursing care
  - Living situation- nursing home versus other
  - Living Will and health care proxy
  - Health care insurance
Medications

- Aricept (donepezil)
- Exelon (rivastigmine)
- Razadyne (galantamine hydrobromide)
- Namenda (memantine)

- These medications do not reverse dementia
- These medications help slow down your decline
- Side effects are common!
  - Nausea
  - Dizziness
  - Diarrhea
Caregiver Support

- Taking care of a person with dementia is hard work!
- Caregiver can get tired or frustrated
- Support groups
- Day programs or respite programs
- Join Alzheimer’s Association for support programs ([http://www.alz.org/rochesterny/](http://www.alz.org/rochesterny/))
- Don’t be afraid to ask others for help
Questions?

- Thank you for coming!

- Next Deaf Health Talk will be on Thursday, April 15 at 7 pm!

- Location: Rochester Recreation Club for the Deaf
Topics for Next Month

- Audience vote
  - Please provide topics that you would like to have for next month in April