- Alzheimer's Disease / Dental care

Slowing down Alzheimer's

Panay News · 30 Jun 2023 · 8 · (By Dr. Joseph D. Lim and Dr. Kenneth Lester Lim, BS-MMG, DDM, MSc-OI)

GOOD oral health slows down cognitive decline in patients with mild Alzheimer's disease. Cognitive decline is the gradual deterioration of mental faculties due to, among others, Alzheimer's. One example among the elderly is their paying less attention to prolonged tasks and difficulty in identifying irrelevant information.

A study published in Geriatric Nursing shows that oral health intervention reduces the presence of bacteria in the mouth and slows down cognitive decline among patients with mild Alzheimer's.

Oral health has been linked before to cognitive decline. Those with Alzheimer's, for instance, may be forgetful or unable to brush their teeth and it could have dire consequences on the oral health of the elderly.

The study hypothesized that oral health interventions would have beneficial effects on oral health and improves cognitive performance at six months in patients with mild Alzheimer's.

"A low- cost intervention based on self- determination theory, cognitive reserve hypothesis, and neuroinflammation improved cognitive performance and microbiome in patients with mild Alzheimer's disease after six months," the study observed.

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive, irreversible brain disorder that affects memory, thinking, and language skills.

Over time, people living with Alzheimer's disease may become unable to carry out daily activities.

Alzheimer's causes brain cells to stop functioning, lose connections with other brain cells, and die over the course of many years. Exactly why this happens is unknown.

In advanced stages, a person living with Alzheimer's disease will experience dementia: a decline in brain function severe enough to interfere with daily life.

Age is the best known risk factor for Alzheimer's disease with symptoms usually appearing after age 60.

You may also be at higher risk of developing Alzheimer's disease if you: are a woman; have ever had a moderate or severe head injury; have heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, or obesity; have an immediate family member with Alzheimer's disease; and engage in few physical, mental, or social activities.

Although there is no cure, several medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (US FDA)are available to help people maintain mental function and slow or delay the symptoms of Alzheimer's.

Treatments may also help manage behavioral symptoms such as anxiety and other health conditions like high blood pressure.

Alzheimer 's affects about 4 million Filipinos and is the one of the leading cause of death in the country.

According to the World Health Organization, 0.16 percent of total deaths in the Philippines may be traced to Alzheimer's. The age adjusted death rate is 1.74 per 100,000 of population.

According to Alzheimer's Disease International, over 55 million people worldwide have dementia. The number of people affected is set to rise to 139 million by 2050, with the greatest increases in low and middle income countries

Already 60 percent of people with dementia live in low and middle income countries, but by 2050 this will rise to 71 percent.

A new case of dementia arises somewhere in the world every 3 seconds. Up to three quarters of those with dementia worldwide have not received a diagnosis.

Almost 80 percent of the general public are concerned about developing dementia at some point and 1 in 4 people think that there is nothing that can be done to prevent dementia.

That may not be exactly true. As the study published in Geriatric Nursing shows, good oral health care slows down cognitive decline.

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