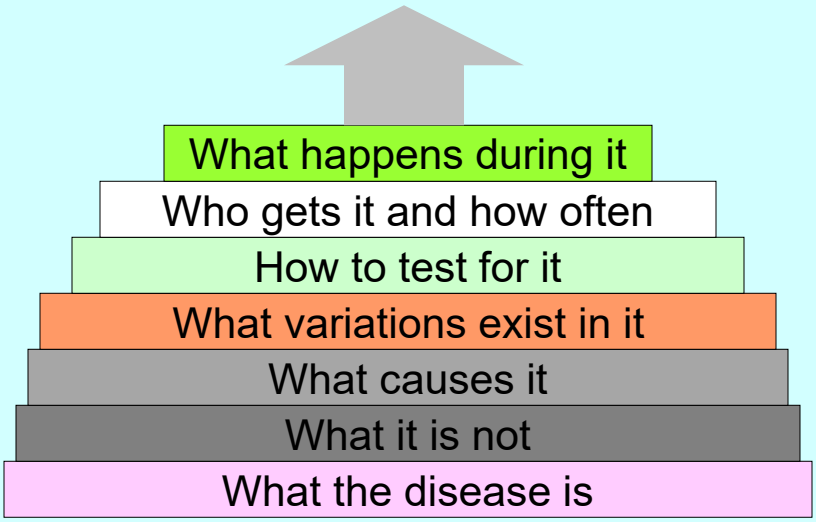
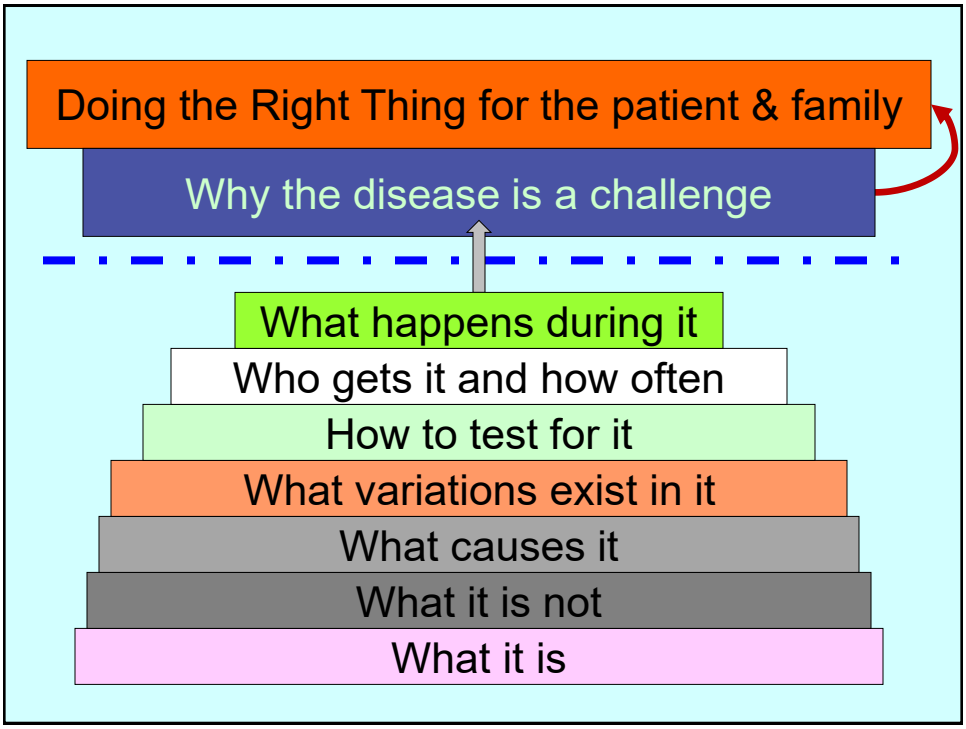
The Whole Person in Dementia

Stephen Thielke
sthielke@u.washington.edu
206 668-1030

"BOOK LEARNING"




Doing the Right Thing for the patient & family
Why the disease is a challenge
What happens during it
Who gets it and how often
How to test for it
What variations exist in it
What causes it
What it is not
What it is


GRAY'S Anatomy
Clinical Medicine
Pharmacology
Medicine

Scenario #1

One of your parents develops memory problems, cannot remember which pills they took, gets lost when driving, and is paranoid about neighbors stealing things. They left the stove on and almost burned the house down.

-Practically, what do you do?

-What are your main needs?

-How can medical care help you?

Scenario #2

Your parent requires assistance with dressing, eating, bathing, and toileting. They cannot remember your name. You are the only one available to care for them.

-Practically, what do you do?

-What are your main needs?

-How can medical care help you?

Scenario #3

You live with your parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins in a large multigenerational household. Someone is always home. People are flexible in their schedules. Your parent needs assistance with dressing, eating, bathing, and toileting. They cannot remember anyone's name.

-Practically, what do you do?

-What are your main needs?

-How can medical care help you?

Definition of Dementia (#1)

A **significant**
chronic
loss
in **memory and/or mental functions**,
involving **structural damage** to the brain (= death of neurons)

Definition of Dementia (#2)

A progressive neurodegenerative condition with functional consequences.

NOT
- -Lifelong
- -Abrupt or acute
- -Normal aging
- -Insignificant

NOT NECESSARILY
- -A problem with memory
- -Alzheimer's
- -Disturbed behavior
- -Age-related
- -Fatal

Definition #3: DSM-5 Criteria for Major Neurocognitive Disorder (Dementia)

- -Significant cognitive decline in one or more domains
- -The impairments interfere with independence (i.e. cause **FUNCTIONAL** problems)
- -The symptoms are not due to delirium or another mental disorder
- -Domains of cognition:
  - -Complex attention (multitasking)
  - -Executive function (complex tasks)
  - -Learning and memory
  - -Language
  - -Perceptual-motor (coordinated activities)
  - -Social cognition (appropriateness)

DSM-5 Major Neurocognitive Disorder (Dementia) Descriptors

-Possible vs probable

-With or without behavioral disturbance (psychosis, mood problems, agitation)

-Severity: based on **FUNCTIONING**

- -Mild: Instrumental activities of daily living (ADLs) are affected
- -Moderate: Basic ADLs affected
- -Severe: Fully dependent in ADLs

Other psychiatric conditions	**Dementia**
Acute and/or chronic	Progressive
Treatable and/or curable	Irreversible
Abnormalities in thoughts, feelings, and/or emotions	Decline in cognitive abilities and functioning
Caused by coping mechanisms or brain chemistry	Caused by DEATH of brain cells

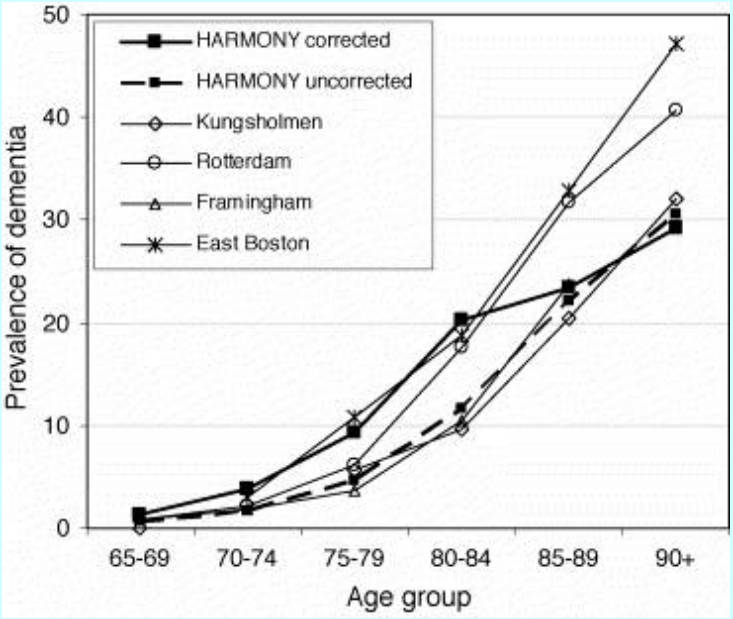
Dementia Prevalence

About 1% at age 65

6-8% if older than 65

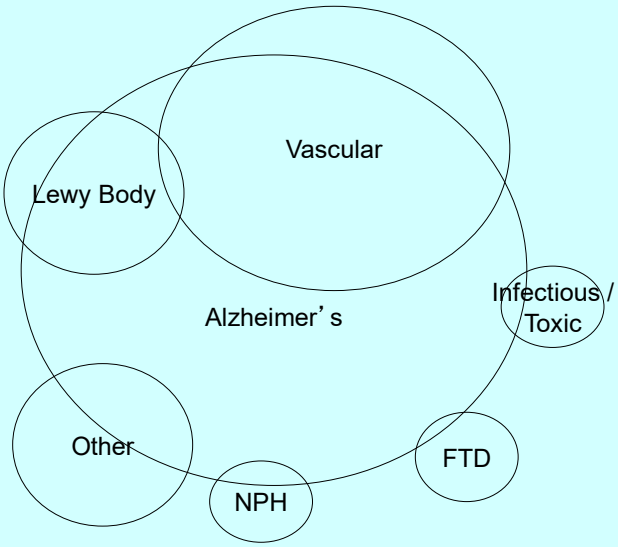
30% if older than 80

Frequency of Dementia

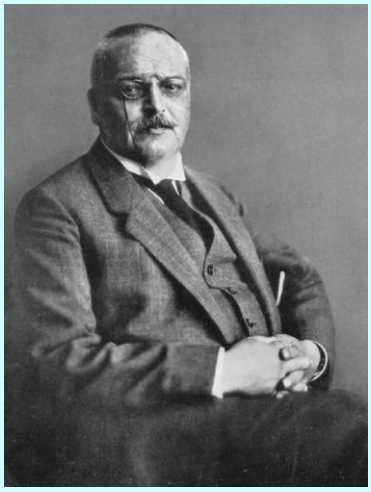


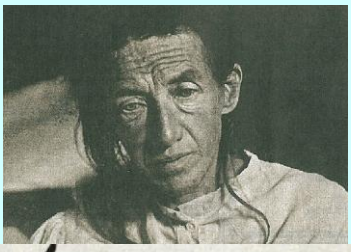
Types of Dementia:

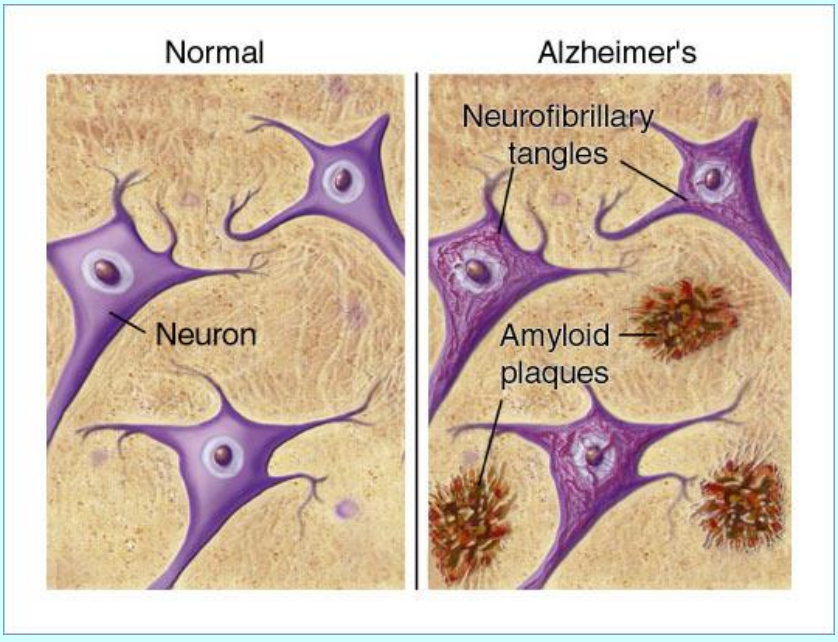
- Alzheimer's
- Vascular
- Lewy Body
- Frontotemporal

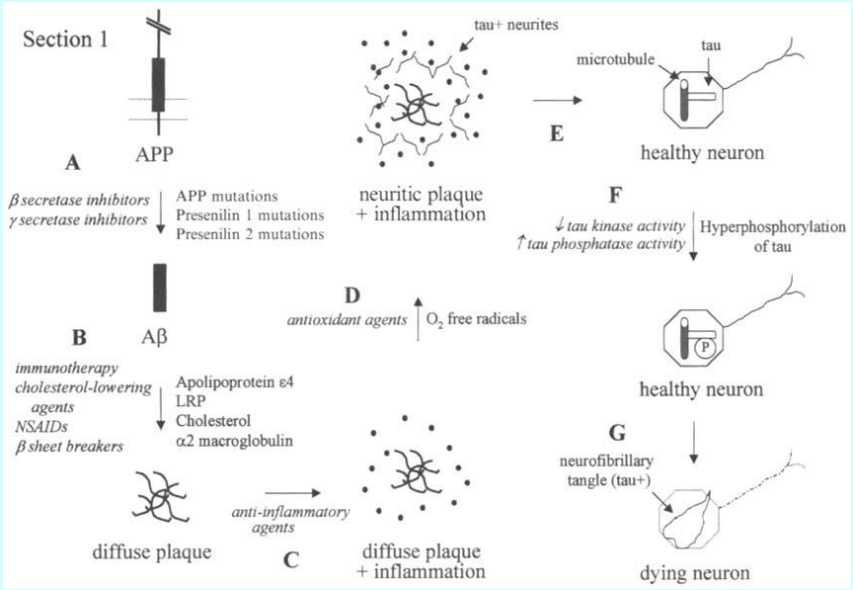


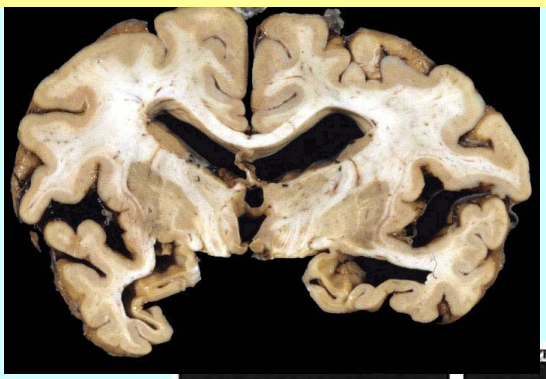
Alzheimer's Disease



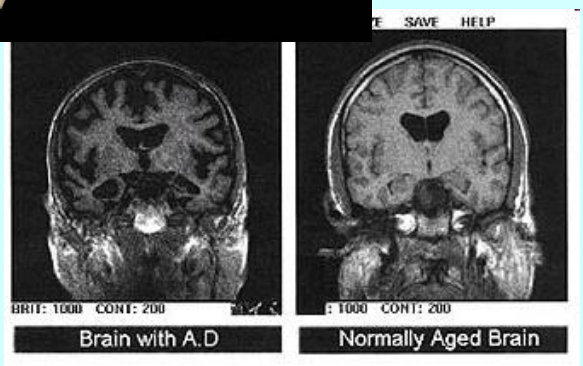








THE NEURONS HAVE DIED



Alzheimer's Disease

Memory impairment + one of the following:

- -Aphasia (speech problem)
- -Apraxia (motor activity problem)
- -Agnosia (recognition problem)
- -Executive dysfunction

Functional impairment secondary to cognitive deficits

Not another cause

Clinical Hallmarks of Alzheimer's

Slow, steady decline over **years**

Generally impaired insight into disease process

Generally a late presentation for medical care

Little waxing and waning

Death typically from medical causes in about 8-10 years

Mild Alzheimer's

- MMSE or MoCA 20-24
- Usually during the first 2-3 years after diagnosis
- Primarily memory, language, and problem-solving deficits
- Mild difficulty with day-to-day functioning, decision-making
- Often noticed, without any action taken

Conditions that can mimic early Alzheimer's

Delirium (including medication side effects and poorly managed medical conditions)

Sleep apnea

Vision and hearing problems

Mental health issues, especially PTSD

Moderate Alzheimer's

- MMSE or MoCA 11-20
- 3-6 years following diagnosis
- Speech and coordinated action decline
- Loss of IADLS and increased need for assistance with ADLs
- May show psychiatric symptoms such as paranoia

Severe Alzheimer's

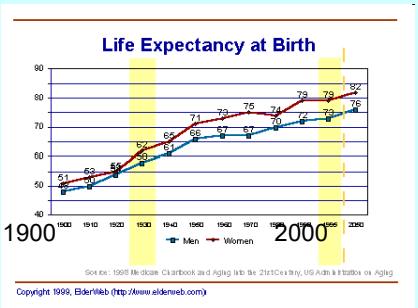
- Usually 6-10 years following diagnosis
- Severe language deficits
- May show pronounced behavioral symptoms such as agitation and aggression (not necessarily worsening)
- Very late in the course can see muscle rigidity, gait disturbances, incontinence, swallowing problems

"When you've seen one case of Alzheimer's, you've seen one case of Alzheimer's."

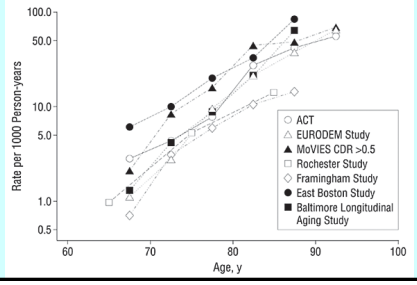
Genetics of Alzheimer's

- Early age of onset (< 60 years) is more likely to be inherited or "familial"
- Most Alzheimer's starts after age 70 and is "sporadic"
- Having a relative with "sporadic" Alzheimer's does not increase risk very much
- Several known genes (i.e. ApoE4) increase risk, but are not a guarantee
- Most forms are probably a consequence of multiple random brain changes that accumulate over time

Why is there more Alzheimer's? Because people live longer!



Incidence of Alzheimer's Disease by Age



Vascular Dementia

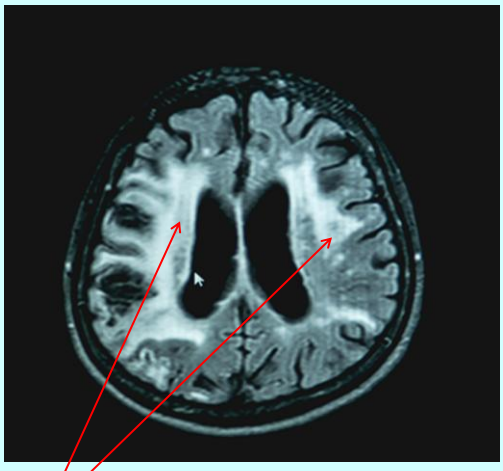
MICROVASCULAR (small blood vessel) pathology - different than strokes

Clinically similar to and overlaps largely with Alzheimer's

Risk factors: **hypertension**; smoking; hypercholesterolemia; diabetes; cardiovascular disease, BUT worsens even when these are treated -- ???

Not necessarily definitive findings on neuroimaging

Vascular Dementia

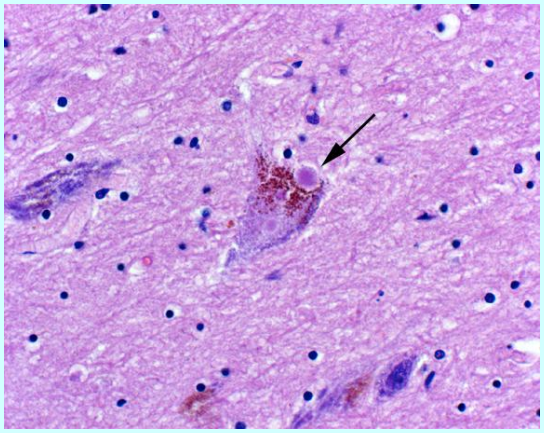


"Periventricular white matter hyperintensities"

Lewy Body Dementia

Occurs throughout the brain

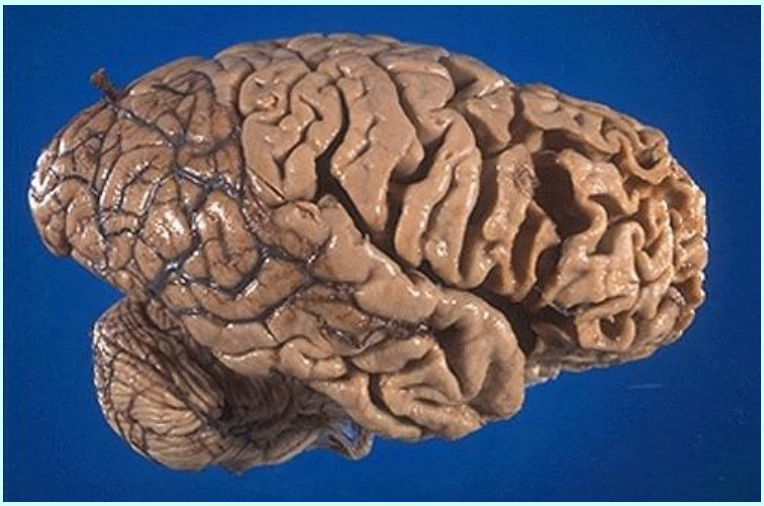
Alzheimer's is mainly in the cortical (outer) layers



Lewy Body Dementia.

- Overall incidence 7-26% of dementia cases, often with Alzheimer's disease
- "Parkinsonism" (stooped posture, shuffling gait, slow movements, cogwheeling, masked facies)
- **Visual hallucinations** (usually not scary or bizarre)
- Waxing and waning
- Cognitive & memory impairment may come AFTER these other symptoms
- **Antipsychotics often worsen symptoms**

Frontotemporal Dementia



Frontotemporal Dementia

Frontal brain atrophy: usually visible on brain imaging

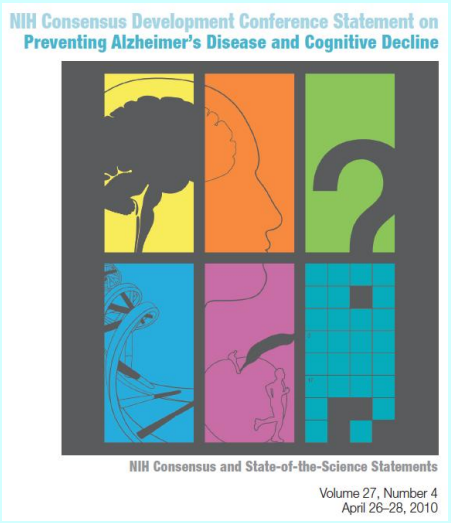
Personality changes, disinhibition, executive dysfunction

Later: memory and cognitive impairment

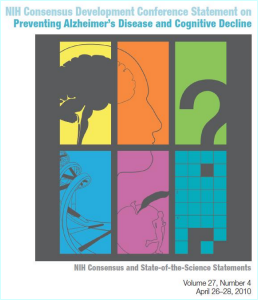
Earlier age of onset than Alzheimer's or vascular dementia

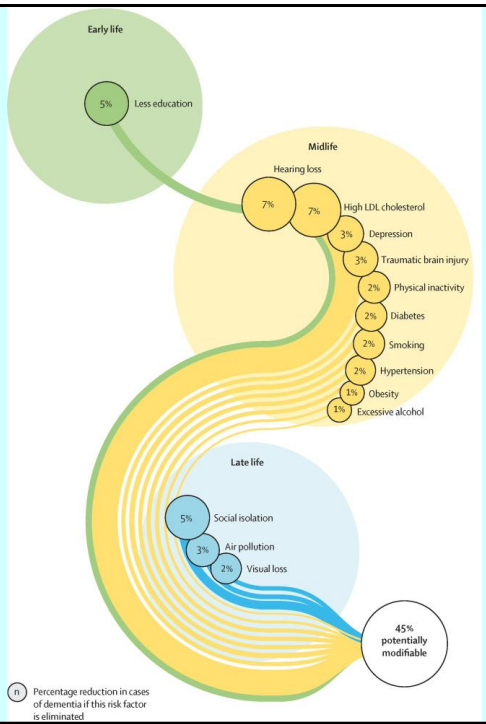
Usually familial

Prevention of Dementia?

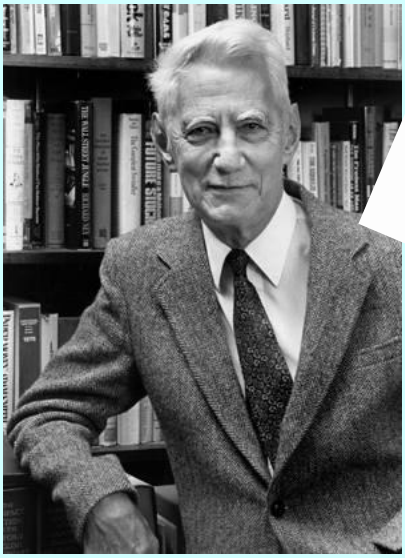


"Currently, firm conclusions cannot be drawn about the association of any modifiable risk factor with cognitive decline or Alzheimer's disease. Evidence is insufficient to support the use of pharmaceutical agents or dietary supplements to prevent cognitive decline or Alzheimer's disease."





Dementia prevention, intervention, and care: 2024 report of the *Lancet* standing Commission. The Lancet 404, Issue 10452, P572-628August 10, 2024



Screening for Dementia?

New blood test predicts Alzheimer's, dementia

Researchers have developed a new blood test that can predict with 90% accuracy whether a healthy person will develop Alzheimer's or cognitive decline within 3 years. They report how they identified and validated the 10 biomarkers that form the basis of the test in a study published in *Nature Medicine*.

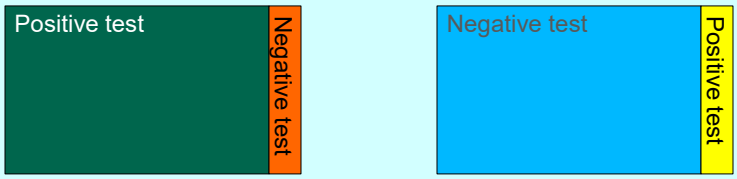
Screening for dementia

Test predicts with 90% accuracy

→ if you have the disease, you will get a positive test 9 out of 10 times

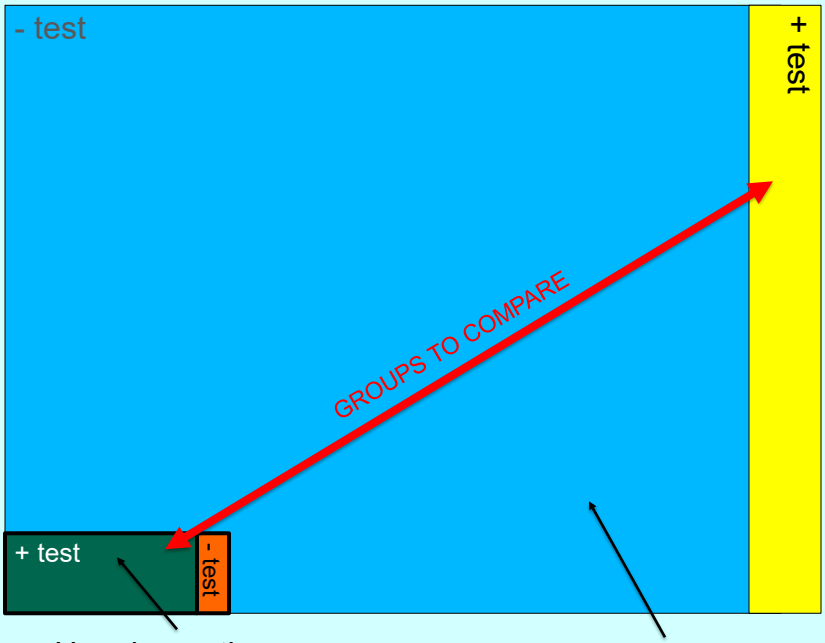
→if you do not have the disease, you will get a negative test 9 out of 10 times

→Assume that 4% of people have dementia



Has dementia

No dementia



Has dementia

No dementia

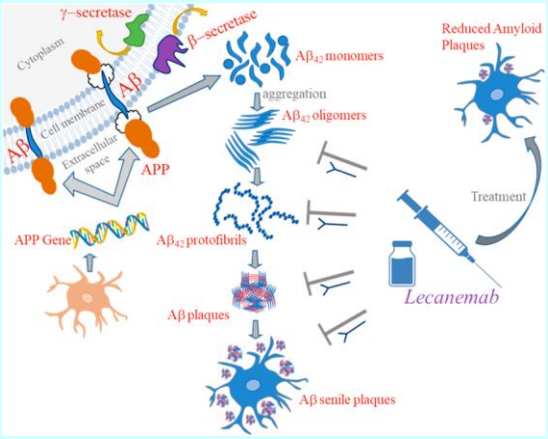
- If you get a **negative** test (868 people did), your likelihood of **having dementia is 0.4% (false negative)**
- If you get a **positive** test (132 did), your likelihood of **not having dementia is 73% (false positive)**
- **More than two out of three** people who are told they have dementia by this test will **not** in fact have it

Screening

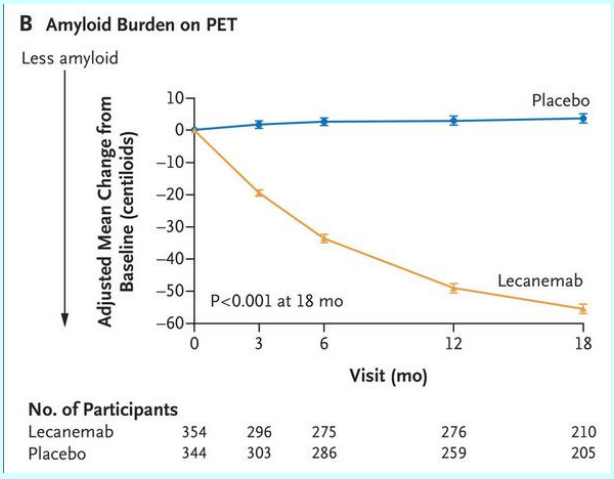
- Given the high false positive rate, routine screening for dementia is <u>not</u> recommended
- It works better to wait until people observe that they are having concerns or problems

Dementia Treatment

Aducanumab
Lecanemab
Donanemab

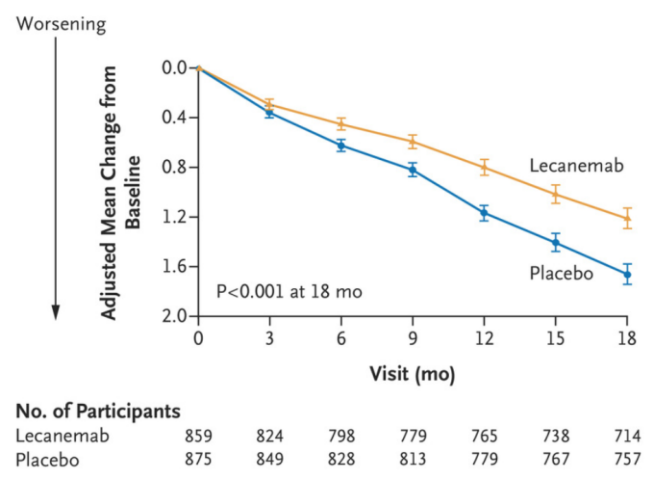


Change in Amyloid



Van Dyck et al, Lecanemab in Early Alzheimer's Disease. *N Engl J Med* 2023; 388:9-21

Change in "CDR-SB"

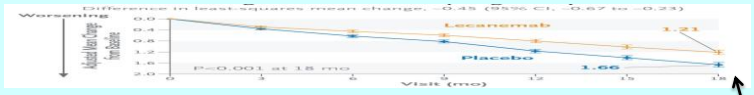


Van Dyck et al, Lecanemab in Early Alzheimer's Disease. *N Engl J Med* 2023; 388:9-21

CDR "Boxes"

CDR Score	0 Healthy	0.5 Very Mild Impairment	1 Mild	2 Moderate	3 Severe
Memory	No memory loss or slight inconsistent forgetfulness	Consistent slight forgetfulness; partial recollection of events; "benign" forgetfulness	Moderate memory loss; more marked for recent events; defect interferes with everyday activities	Severe memory loss; only highly learned material retained; new material rapidly lost	Severe memory loss, only fragments remain
Orientation	Fully orientated	Fully orientated except for slight difficulty with time relationships	Moderate difficulty with time relationships; may have geographic disorientation elsewhere	Severe difficulty with time relationships; usually disorientated in time, often to place	Orientated to person only
Judgment Problem Solving	Solves everyday problems and business affairs well; judgment good in relation to past performance	Slight impairment in solving problems, similarities, differences	Moderate difficulty in handling problems, similarities, differences	Severely impaired in handling problems, similarities, differences	Unable to make judgments or solve problems
Community Affairs	Independent function at usual level in job, shopping, volunteer and social groups	Slight impairment in these activities	Unable to function independently at these activities though may still be engaged in some	No pretense of independent function outside home Appears well enough to be taken to functions outside a family home	No pretense of independent function outside home Appears too ill to be taken to functions outside a family home
Home & Hobbies	Life at home, hobbies, intellectual interests well maintained	Life at home, hobbies, intellectual interests slightly impaired	Mild but definite impairment of function at home; more complicated hobbies abandoned	Only simple chores preserved; very restricted interests, poorly maintained	No significant function in home
Personal Care	Fully capable of self care	Fully capable of self care	Needs prompting	Requires assistance in hygiene, keeping of personal effects	Requires much help with personal care

Clinical Dementia Rating Scale – Sum of Boxes

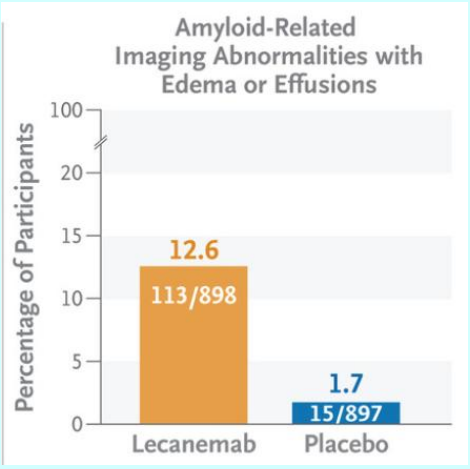


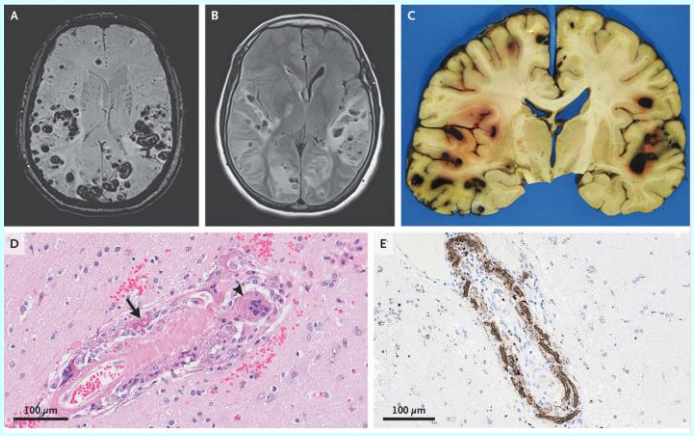
0.45-point difference

18 point scale

0.5 points is considered the smallest clinically meaningful change

Brain Edema or Bleeding





Reish et al. Multiple Cerebral Hemorrhages in a Patient Receiving Lecanemab and Treated with t-PA for Stroke. *N Engl J Med* 2023; 388:478-479

The truly important issues:

Why is dementia a problem?

How can we help people with dementia?

Caring for the Whole Patient, the Family, and the Environment

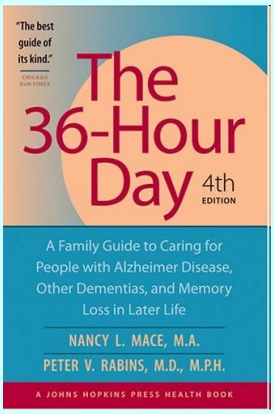
Listen

Don't make assumptions about what is easy or difficult

Screen caregivers and family members for depression

Focus on aggregate quality of life for the whole family unit

Recommend the Alzheimer's Association, County Senior Services, private social workers



Agitation

Figure out what is going on **before** turning to medications

Main reasons for agitation:

- -Delirium
- -Unmet needs
- -Conditioning
- -Natural response to the circumstances

Antipsychotic medications have a **black box** warning for dementia (about double risk of death)

Stephen Thielke
sthielke@u.washington.edu
(206) 668-1030