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Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!

Enhancing the Quality of Life for People with Alzheimer's and Their Families

By William Hammond, J.D.

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Hammond, J.D.**

Learning how to communicate with loved ones who have Alzheimer's Disease is often a difficult task for families. It can be heartbreaking and confusing to witness a loved one exhibit behavior that is far from their usual temperament. In order to sustain relationships and enhance coping abilities, family members and caregivers must learn how to communicate with their loved ones in ways that can enhance the quality of life for the individual.

Techniques for Communication

Learning how to successfully communicate with your loved one can help to keep undesired behaviors like agitation and wandering to a minimum as well as improve their quality of life. There are a few basic techniques caregivers and family members should keep in mind when communicating with their loved one.

First, approaching a person from the front can be helpful in reducing the potential of surprise. The element of surprise can be fear-producing and disorienting for someone with Alzheimer's. Second, face the person as you talk with them, and avoid spending time in a setting with a lot of sensory stimulation. Too much surrounding noise or movement can be confusing and affect your loved one's ability to communicate. Third, if a situation looks like it might get out of hand, distraction can be helpful to diffuse the situation. For example, introducing another activity such as a walk or drive can help to redirect their attention. Lastly, speaking slowly in a low-pitch and remembering to ask only one question at a time can help your loved one understand and minimize confusion. The above are a few basic keys to communicating with someone who has Alzheimer's. More information regarding communication can be found at ElderCare Online (www.ec-online.net).

Helpful Interventions

Sometimes prescription medications are appropriate for those with Alzheimer's to alleviate psychotic symptoms or enhance memory and cognitive functions. However, there are other interventions that caregivers and family members can take in order to enhance their relationships and quality of life for the individual.

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Family members can help to preserve their loved one's skills and strengths by identifying areas of satisfaction and pleasure. Enabling your loved one to participate in activities which they have enjoyed their whole life can help to reduce agitation, improve their ability to cope with the disease, and increase their sense of dignity. For example, if your loved one used to enjoy painting or gardening, set time aside to participate in these activities in a way that is safe and manageable. Activities that are as simple as being around pets, going for walks, and listening to music can help to positively structure time and enhance quality of life.

Lastly, watching video biographies are a great way to spend time with your loved one. Video biographies are old photographs that are videotaped and narrated by family members. These videos can often help to reduce agitation during a visit and possibly help to spark the memory of the person suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. There is a lot of room for creativity in constructing video biographies as well as the opportunity to include multiple generations of family members in the

process.

William G. Hammond, JD is a nationally known elder law attorney and founder of The Alzheimer's Resource Center. He is a frequent guest on radio and television and has developed innovative solutions to guide families who have a loved one suffering from Alzheimer's. For more information you can visit his website at www.BeatAlzheimers.com

Alzheimer's Toxin May Be Key To Slowing Disease

By Baron Grove

Australian scientists say they have identified a toxin which plays a key role in the onset of Alzheimer's, raising hope that a drug targeting the toxin could be developed to slow the degenerative brain disease.

The toxin, called quinolinic acid, kills nerve cells in the brain, leading to dysfunction and death, the scientists said.

"Quinolinic acid may not be the cause of Alzheimer's disease, but it plays a key role in its progression," Alzheimer's researcher Dr Karen Cullen from the University of Sydney said in a statement. "It's the smoking gun, if you like."

"While we won't be able to prevent people from getting Alzheimer's disease, we may eventually, with the use of drugs, be able to slow down the progression."

Alzheimer's is a brain–destroying disease that affects millions of people around the world. As the population gets steadily older, experts estimate numbers will balloon to as many as 16 million in the United States alone by 2015.

More than 200,000 people have Alzheimer's disease in Australia and the number is expected to rise to 730,000 by 2050.

Outward symptoms start with memory loss, which progresses to complete helplessness as brain cells are destroyed. In the brain, neurons die as messy plaques and tangles of protein form.

The Alzheimer's research team from Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital, the University of Sydney and Japan's Hokkaido University found quinolinic acid neurotoxicity in the brains of dementia patients.

Quinolinic acid is part of a biochemical pathway called the kynurenine pathway which is also found in other brain disorders, including Huntington's disease and schizophrenia.

The scientists said there were several drugs in an advanced stage of development for other conditions which targeted this pathway and that these drugs, which still need to be tested, could be used to complement other treatments for Alzheimer's.

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