

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE



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WHAT IS IT?

- Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most common cause of dementia in older adults over 65. Early onset is considered under 65 years old. It is an irreversible progressive disorder of the brain that affects memory, abstract thinking, judgment, problem solving, language, and personality.
- Start in hippocampus, part of brain used for memory.
- Main factors involved in AD:
 - Development of beta amyloid plaques
 - Neurofibrillary tau tangles
 - Losses of connections between neurons
- Risk factors:
 - Low physical activity
 - Factors associated with cardiovascular disease (i.e. uncontrolled diabetes, hypertension)



SPECIAL TESTS

- True diagnosis occurs on autopsy
- CT/MRI - to see brain atrophy
- Rule out all other possible causes of dementia

DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS

- Non-Alzheimer's dementias
- Reversible dementias
- Parkinson's disease
- Huntington's disease
- Brain tumor
- Normal pressure hydrocephalus
- Multiple Sclerosis



TREATMENT EXAMPLES

- Exercise and guarding with activity
- Increase overall activity
- Improve/maintain function
- Balance training to decrease fall risk
- Caregiver education on cueing for patient
- Safety, modifications, and recommendations for home

EXAMPLE QUESTION

You are evaluating a patient in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. What are the most important factors to address with this patient?

1. home exercise program to maintain activity and fitness
2. Balance training to reduce fall risk
3. Caregiver education on positioning to prevent pressure sores
4. Both A and B



Answer: Both A and B

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