Unraveling Dementia



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Dementia, now known as major neurocognitive disorder in the DSM-5 TR, encompasses a spectrum of cognitive impairments severe enough to affect daily activities and often accompanied by behavioral disturbances.

The transition from a normal brain to one affected by dementia occurs progressively over time, with increasing abnormal protein accumulation in the brain. Mild neurocognitive disorder precededs major neurocognitive disorder and is recognised by the presence of cognitive impairment with preserved independent function. Cognitive impairment may occur in any of the six cognitive domains, without emphasis on memory loss alone. Over time, these symptoms may progress, culminating in major neurocognitive disorder, where cognitive deficits significantly impair daily functioning, resulting in dependence on others for basic needs or activities of daily living.

Dementia is an umbrella term encompassing various primary and secondary causes. Primary dementias include Alzheimer's disease, characterized by the accumulation of amyloid plaques and tau tangles in the brain, dementia with Lewy bodies, marked by abnormal alpha synuclein protein deposits, and frontotemporal lobar degeneration, a complicated syndrome characterized by a younger onset of presentation and affecting behavior and language.





Secondary dementias range from vascular dementia, where neuron death occurs due to impaired blood flow to the brain, to conditions like HIV, traumatic brain injury, and nutritional deficiencies such as Vitamin B12 deficiency.

While there's currently no cure for dementia, lifestyle modifications play a pivotal role in mitigating its progression. Engaging in regular physical activity, consuming a balanced diet rich in fresh food including fruits and vegetables, and addressing underlying conditions like depression and hypertension can significantly impact cognitive health. Additionally, maintaining social connections and engaging in cognitive exercises like reading and problem-solving bolster cognitive resilience.

Despite the lack of definitive treatment, secondary prevention and supportive interventions are instrumental in managing dementia-related behavioral problems. Through tailored interventions, including psychotherapy, caregiver support, and pharmacotherapy when necessary, individuals with dementia can experience improved quality of life and enhanced coping mechanisms.

In conclusion, navigating the complexities of dementia requires a holistic approach, encompassing empathy, warm care and proactive intervention. By addressing the multifaceted aspects of this condition, we can strive towards better outcomes and enhanced well-being for those affected by dementia and their caregivers alike.

