



A Team Approach to Identifying and Treating Memory Issues in the Elderly

All too often, when the elderly experience changes in their physical or psychological functioning, aging is blamed. That assumption is dangerous—treatment providers and caregivers may miss an underlying condition for which there is a reasonable intervention. For instance, memory changes do not necessarily indicate onset of dementia; changes in memory can be related to depression or a urinary tract infection. Undiagnosed depression is a serious problem that can be mitigated with pharmacological and behavioral therapies and urinary tract infections will usually respond to antibiotic treatments.

Memory loss -- of varying degrees -- is undiagnosed in as many as 76% of elderly; it is a critical public health concern. Evaluating memory decline and implementing recommendations requires coordination from different disciplines, and involves the patient, and their family and friends. A thorough assessment will help determine whether memory issues are physiologically and/or psychologically based. A comprehensive evaluation might include the following: neuropsychological testing, full medical evaluation, depression and anxiety screening, and lifestyle assessment. Treatments may include medication, psycho-education, mindfulness training, meditation and stress management, physical therapy, nutritional assessments, and referral to community resources.

If you are concerned about your memory, or that of a loved one, please reach out for help. A comprehensive assessment can help pinpoint the problem and provide tools to enhance your, or your loved one's, quality of life.

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