

Healthy Transitions®

WINTER 2007-2008 A HEALTHCARE RESOURCE FOR OUR FRIENDS WHO ARE 55-PLUS



Research, Support Services Benefit Alzheimer's Patients

More than 5 million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia, according to the national Alzheimer's Association. There is no cure for Alzheimer's, but physicians and scientists at the Cognitive Neurology and Alzheimer's Disease Center at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine are investigating treatments to prevent the disease and slow its progression.

Dementia is the general term used to describe a group of symptoms caused by changes in brain function resulting in symptoms such as repeatedly asking the same questions and neglecting personal safety, hygiene and nutrition.

"We've entered an entirely new era in understanding the biology and the genetics of dementia," says Marek-Marsel Mesulam, MD, a neurologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, the Ruth and Evelyn Dunbar Professor of Neurology and Psychiatry at the Feinberg School and director of the center. "While not effective for everyone, the four drugs currently approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat Alzheimer's do benefit some patients. And, there are promising new medications that we hope will

be tested soon. A new generation of drugs that may go into the clinical trial phase will target amyloid, a toxic chemical in the brain linked to Alzheimer's."

Northwestern's center is one of only 30 Alzheimer's disease research centers in the United States designated and funded by the National Institute on Aging of the National Institutes of Health. Northwestern's center is dedicated to discovering causes and treatments for diseases that target brain function, such as Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, and working to ensure that patients and their families benefit from this research. This is accomplished in part by offering diagnosis, treatment, education and support services through the Neurobehavior and Memory Health Clinic at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

Alzheimer's disease gradually destroys an individual's memory and ability to perform familiar tasks, communicate, make judgments and carry out daily activities. Changes in personality and behavior also may occur as Alzheimer's progresses. Eventually, those with Alzheimer's need help with basic functions such as eating, dressing and personal hygiene. On average, people with the disease die four to six years after diagnosed.

Although the cause is unknown, the greatest known risk factors for late-onset Alzheimer's disease, the most common form, are increasing age and a family history of the disease. Late-onset Alzheimer's typically affects individuals older than age 65.



Patients with early-stage Alzheimer's disease can benefit from social interaction, cultural outings and intellectual stimulation.

Those who experience symptoms before age 65 are considered to have early-onset Alzheimer's disease. Statistics indicate that approximately 6 to 8 percent of all Alzheimer's cases nationally are early-onset.

Darby Morhardt, MSW, LCSW, education director for the center and clinical social worker at Northwestern Memorial's Neurobehavior and Memory Clinic,

says it is important to get a definitive diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease as early as possible to allow treatment to begin when the medications are most likely to be effective and to offer patients and families an opportunity to plan for the future.

"It helps for families to have a name for what is happening so they can make plans as early in the process as possible," Morhardt says. "We can help them understand the different behaviors they are likely to encounter, such as repetitive statements and questions, and explain that they won't be able to modify those behaviors. Then they know they will need to respond to and live with these changes."

To benefit patients in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease, Morhardt counsels families to provide an enriching, meaningful environment with social interaction. "Many early-stage patients want the companionship of others who are going through this," she says. "We offer a support group for those patients and a separate group for their caregivers because they are dealing with issues different from those caring for individuals in the later stages."

For more information, call Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Resources and Physician Referral Service at 312-926-8400. **M**

Geriatric Specialists Target Risk Factors for Falls

Gait and balance issues are an increasing concern as people age and are considered a main cause for falling. Being aware of your risk factors for gait and stability difficulties and knowing how to prevent problems can keep you on your feet for a long time.

"Studies show that 35 to 40 percent of people older than 65 will fall at least once a year, primarily due to gait and balance problems. Some people fall repeatedly and frequently and any fall should be reported to your physician," says Adnan Arseven, MD, an internist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and assistant professor of Geriatrics at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine.

Almost 20 to 30 percent of these falls result in severe injuries, with hip fractures being the most common, and can lead to a functional decline, says Dr. Arseven, who treats patients

through the Geriatric Service at Northwestern Memorial.

The Geriatric Service provides the medical expertise and care to help people deal with common health problems as they age. Northwestern Memorial ranked

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among the nation's top 20 hospitals in *U.S. News and World Report's* 2007 "America's Best Hospitals" list for its geriatrics specialty.

Having difficulty walking and maintaining balance is triggered by a variety of reasons including Parkinson's disease, stroke, spine problems, nerve damage and even effects from poor nutrition and

vision-related conditions such as cataracts. Being dizzy or light-headed, sometimes linked to blood pressure medication or a neurological condition, also increases the risk for balance difficulties and falling.

"Once a person falls they often develop the 'fear of falling' syndrome. They are reluctant to get up to move around, they limit activity and are more likely to fall again," says Karen Glasser Scandrett, MD, a physician on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and assistant professor of Geriatrics at the Feinberg School. Dr. Scandrett also treats patients through the Geriatric Service.

The Geriatric Service offers a comprehensive gait and balance assessment and a prevention and treatment plan if needed. Experts in geriatric medicine take a holistic approach, looking at all potential risk factors for a fall. In addition to full physical examination, they evaluate a person's gait

and balance, vision and hearing, and review their medications. Dr. Arseven says physicians also consider changing dose or type of medications because some can increase fall risk.

Treatment typically includes physical therapy with gait training and muscle strengthening to improve lower extremity strength and balance. A physical or occupational therapist also may visit the patient's home, if the patient is homebound, to evaluate lighting and furniture placement and make suggestions to improve function and safety in the home.

"Additionally, it is important for a first fall to have an evaluation, which may indicate a correctable medical factor," Dr. Scandrett says.

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See the Calendar of Events on the back of this page.

Estate Planning Ensures Your Final Wishes Are Fulfilled

Careful estate planning requires time and effort, but the rewards can be invaluable. Done appropriately, it can save you, your estate and your heirs from unnecessary taxes and emotional stress. Most importantly, estate planning ensures that your final wishes are fulfilled. Following are four basic steps you can take to organize your affairs.

Step 1: Outline Your Objectives

When outlining objectives, most people make plans for themselves, loved ones and the charitable interests closest to them. As you do this, take into account any concerns or barriers that you foresee. For example, are you afraid of outliving your wealth? Are you worried about the volatility of the stock market and how the economy will affect your finances? Many people fear that mental or physical disabilities will leave them unable to care for themselves or unable to manage their affairs. Also consider how you would like your medical care to be provided under different healthcare scenarios and whom you would trust to make your healthcare decisions if you were not able. These are genuine concerns and it is important to address them when creating a personalized estate plan.

Step 2: Inventory Your Assets

Make sure that your inventory includes, but is not limited to, your home, real estate, cash, certificates of deposit (CDs), money

market accounts, stocks, bonds, individual retirement accounts (IRAs), deferred compensation plans and life insurance. On your inventory, it is helpful to note who holds the title, the current value of your assets and any liabilities that exist. To assist with this step, a complimentary copy of "A Personal and Financial Information Record" is available from Northwestern Memorial Foundation. (Instructions on how to obtain a copy may be found at the end of this article.)

Step 3: Consider Potential Beneficiaries

Who are the most important people in your life? Have any charitable organizations played a significant role in your life? If your will or trust is not specific about your wishes, the state will decide for you. Consider how much and/or what type of assets you would like to bequeath to individuals and charitable beneficiaries. This will assist your advisors as they help you decide how to transfer property in the most effective manner for tax purposes.

Step 4: Assemble Your Team

Once the above information is collected, you will need the assistance of professional advisors to help you turn your ideas and wishes into an effective plan. It is important to invest time in selecting the appropriate members of your estate planning team. In selecting a team, consider those people who have already assisted you with your finances. They may

include an accountant, financial planner, investment counselor, insurance professional and possibly a charitable gift planner from each of your charitable beneficiaries. You also will need a qualified estate planning attorney who will create the legal will or trust document. Additionally, your attorney can help you create a living will and healthcare power of attorney.

How do you select an appropriate attorney? Trusted friends and family may have recommendations or you can consult the Chicago Bar Association for names and credentials of specialists in your area. It is very important that your attorney be someone with whom you are very comfortable and who understands your personal goals. Before selecting an attorney, you may want to interview at least three potential candidates. Your team needs to work together in a friendly manner to ensure your objectives are being met.

Finally, consult with your family members to be sure they understand your final wishes for yourself and for your tangible assets. Once your plan is in place, be sure to review and update it every two years or after any major life change such as marriage or death of a spouse.

To receive a copy of "A Personal and Financial Information Record" please contact Julie Captain Fredrickson, director of Planned Giving for Northwestern Memorial Foundation, at 312-926-2490 or by e-mail at jcaptain@nmh.org. [M](#)

Healthy Transitions Winter 2008 Calendar of Events

To register or obtain information for any of these events, call the Health Resources and Physician Referral Service at 312-926-8400, Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. or Saturday between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Health Education

Prostate Cancer: Screening, Diagnosis and Surgical Treatment

Presented by: Kent T. Perry, Jr., MD
Wednesday, March 5; 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Prostate cancer is the most common non-skin cancer in men, affecting approximately 234,000 American men each year. Kent T. Perry, Jr., MD, urologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and assistant professor of Urology at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, will discuss the diagnosis of prostate cancer and surgical treatments, highlighting the comparison between open surgery and the use of a robotic surgical system.

Yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates, Strength and Balance Lecture and Demonstration

Presented by: Jill Stein
Thursday, March 6; 11 a.m. to noon

Northwestern Memorial's Wellness Institute offers a variety of exercise classes for older adults, including Strength and Balance, Pilates Mat, Tai Chi and Yoga. Join Jill Stein, coordinator of the Fitness Class Program at Northwestern Memorial's Wellness Institute, to learn about the benefits of these exercise programs and see demonstrations.

Manage Stress Before It Manages You

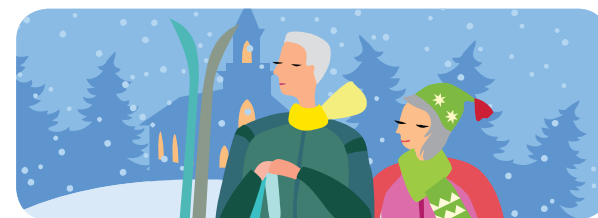
Presented by: Jenny H. Conviser, PsyD
Friday, March 7; 11 a.m. to noon

Keeping up with daily activities, especially if you have health concerns, can be stressful. Join Jenny H. Conviser, PsyD, clinical psychologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and clinical assistant professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Feinberg School, to learn about the effects of stress on health. Stress management techniques will be highlighted to help you renew your energy and outlook.

Exercise and Arthritis: You Should Try It!

Presented by: Nicole LeClaire, OTR/L, Margaret McGovern-Denk, OTR/L and Amanda Murphy, DPT
Monday, March 17; 11 a.m. to noon

Do you have arthritis? Do you experience pain when you walk or move? Do you want to feel better? We can help. Physical and occupational therapists from Northwestern Memorial will discuss the effects of movement and exercise on arthritis and techniques to help reduce your pain and increase your mobility.



Health Resources

Drug Information Center

Have questions about your medications? Not sure what to say to your doctor? Call the Northwestern Memorial Hospital Department of Pharmacy's Drug Information Center at 312-926-7573. The staff, directed by pharmacists, can help you with a variety of resources to answer your questions about prescription medications. If you plan to call, here are some helpful tips: Write down a list of your medications and include the approximate date that you started each one (summer of 2006, for example). Write down any questions you may have. List the symptoms that you feel might be side effects and provide an estimate of when they first appeared. Also, have your prescription medicines in labeled containers near your phone so the staff can work to identify your medication. The Drug Information Center is open on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Healthy Transitions is published by the Division of Public Relations, Marketing and Physician Services, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, as a service to the community. For more information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit www.nmh.org.

If you have comments regarding the Healthy Transitions® program, please contact: Denise Beaufait, AM, LCSW, administrator, Senior Membership Program, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, 240 E. Ontario St., Suite 450, Chicago, IL 60611, 312-926-4335, dbeaufai@nmh.org.

This publication is not intended to replace the advice of your personal physician.

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To register and obtain location information for all events, call 312-926-8400.