Many people believe that forgetfulness or memory loss is a natural occurrence as people age. However, it is well documented that some people are able to maintain their intellectual functions and remain alert well into their golden years. It is never too early to take steps that will preserve your memory.

Memory can be affected by a number of factors, ranging from stress to lack of sleep, or it can be affected by such illnesses as Alzheimer’s disease and vascular dementia. Ignoring forgetfulness and dismissing it as a natural sign of aging creates the risk of allowing illnesses, such as Alzheimer’s disease, to go untreated. An early diagnosis can greatly improve your health and slow the progress of disease. It is important to be aware of your memory and do all you can to maintain your level of cognitive function. What steps can you take in your daily life now to preserve your mind? Below are a set of “good sense” recommendations, and there is evidence that each one may reduce the risk of Alzheimer’s disease.

**Mental Exercise**

The more you use your brain, the stronger it gets. People who keep learning and stay mentally active increase their odds of retaining good brain function as they age. For example, you can sign up for classes, visit museums, or attend art shows. There are also mentally stimulating activities, such as puzzles and crosswords, which can be both fun and good for your brain. Really challenging mental activities, such as learning a new language, may be the best ones to reduce the risk of Alzheimer’s disease.

**Physical Activity**

Have a regular exercise program. Studies show that a regular exercise program, for at least 30 minutes per day, can maintain and/or improve memory in older people. One study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, compared a group who had done little physical activity with those that were a part of a moderate exercise program, 50 minutes of exercise three times a week (“Exercise Effect of Physical Activity on Cognitive Function in Older Adults at Risk for Alzheimer Disease,” 9/3/2008). After six months, participants were given a set of tests, including memory tests such as recalling lists of words. Those who exercised fared markedly better than those who did not. As an added bonus, exercise helps reduce the risk for diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and stroke - illnesses that can lead to memory loss. Simply doing some form of physical activity can be helpful. For example, you can take a brisk walk, garden, or swim...
Diet and Health

Increase your intake of fruits and vegetables, and eat less red meat and dairy. This will help keep your arteries clear and cholesterol levels healthy, and that in turn will decrease your chances of stroke; even small, undetected strokes can cause some form of brain damage. Also, maintaining a healthy diet allows you to lower your chances of getting illnesses such as diabetes and hypertension, which can impair your memory.

Fruits and vegetables are good sources of antioxidants and nutrients that protect against diseases and age-related deterioration throughout the body. Other important nutrients come from fish, a great source of omega-3 fatty acids, which are beneficial to the heart and may protect against Alzheimer's disease.

Visit your clinician regularly to look for other health risks that may affect your memory, such as diabetes and hypertension. Have your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels checked. It is recommended that you see your clinician at ages 30, 40, 50, 55, 60, 65 and so on. Keeping up with the status of your health is a great precautionary step in preventing severe memory loss.

Mental Health

Maintain an active social life, with a network of friends and family, to lessen the likelihood of depression and increase the overall level of brain stimulation. Have your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels checked. It is recommended that you see your clinician at ages 30, 40, 50, 55, 60, 65 and so on. Keeping up with the status of your health is a great precautionary step in preventing severe memory loss.

If you are truly concerned about your memory, it is best to consult with a qualified healthcare professional. One of the first things you may do for yourself is to get a memory screen. Although it is not used for diagnostic purposes, it gives you a good assessment of your memory and other intellectual functions. It is continued on page 3
Spotlight: Deryl Wicks
Research Coordinator, Stanford/VA Aging Clinical Research Center,
Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Stanford University
School of Medicine

Deryl Wicks can never be found sleeping on the job. With an undergraduate degree in psychology from Southeastern Louisiana University, she joined the Stanford/VA Aging Clinical Research Center (ACRC) in 1990. Deryl initially worked with Dr. Leah Friedman as a research assistant on a study of insomnia in normal older adults. She also contributed to the Memory and Mental Health memory-training project.

Deryl is currently working on the Light Treatment Study for individuals with memory problems and their study partners/caregivers. These couples/dyads are set up with light boxes in their own home with the goal of improving daytime alertness and nighttime sleep. The 2-week light treatment is designed to benefit both the person with memory loss as well as the study partner/caregiver.

The Aging Clinical Research Center has recently re-opened our Longitudinal Sleep Study, and as the Light Study nears its conclusion, Deryl will be devoting her efforts to this project. This study is similar to the Light study in that it examines sleep/wake patterns in older adults with memory problems. However, there is no treatment involved in the Longitudinal Sleep Study. The aim is to observe changes in the sleep/wake patterns of this population over time.

Deryl first began work on the Longitudinal study in 1993, contacting participants to re-evaluate their sleep/wake cycles on a yearly basis. The ongoing follow-up allows for long-term connection with study volunteers and their families. Deryl treasures the relationships with these participants, and looks forward to establishing connections with new participants in the future.

Deryl is a member of the Stanford/VA Memory Walk Team and recently participated in the Silicon Valley Memory Walk in San Jose on Sept 20th. This fundraising event featured many organizations devoted to the needs of people affected by Alzheimer’s disease. Deryl also enjoys attending regional conferences, health fairs, classes, and workshops that support her intellectual curiosity and enhance her knowledge of the neurosciences. The Aging Clinical Research Center has been a good fit for Deryl’s long-term interest in psychological research in memory, sleep, and aging. It has provided her an avenue to make contributions towards improving the quality of life of many older adults.

suggested that you have your memory screened yearly after 60 years of age. In recognition of National Alzheimer’s Disease Awareness month in November, the Alzheimer’s Foundation of America will have National Memory Screening Day on November 18, 2008. All across the US, participating sites will be conducting free, confidential memory screenings. There will also be follow-up resources and educational materials for those concerned about memory loss. To learn more about this day and to find sites near your home, go to http://www.nationalmemoryscreening.org. --article by Dawn La

Resources:
**Reducing Amyloid in Alzheimer’s Disease**

Researchers are conducting studies on an experimental medication to block nerve damage and inflammation in the brain that can lead to progressive memory loss and behavioral changes in people with Alzheimer’s disease. Researchers will test an experimental drug that seeks to stop amyloid beta from binding to a receptor in the brain.

You may be eligible to participate if you are:
- Aged 55 – 90 years
- Diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease
- Live at home with a caregiver or partner
- Willing to take medication

To sign up for this study:
Contact: Beatriz Hernandez
(650) 852-3233

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**Sleep Disruption and Modafinil**

To sign up for this study, Contact: Ban Ku
(650) 849-1971

We are recruiting for a study that examines the usefulness of modafinil (Provigil) in treating sleep problems in Mild Cognitive Impairment or Alzheimer’s disease. We anticipate that this drug will both improve your nighttime sleep and make you less sleepy during the daytime. Modafinil is a drug that is FDA-approved for the treatment of sleepiness in a variety of conditions, but has not been examined in older individuals with memory impairment. The study takes place for 4 weeks in your own home, with weekly visits to the VA. There is also a free screening for sleep apnea that will take place in your home.

You may be eligible to participate if you are:
- Diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease or Mild Cognitive Impairment
- Live at home with a caregiver or partner
- Willing to take an FDA approved medication (modafinil)

**Light Study**

This study is testing light treatment to improve daytime alertness and nighttime sleep. It is designed to benefit both the individual with memory impairment and their caregiver. A Stanford research team will set up light equipment for the treatment in your home and assist in making your participation in the study as convenient as possible.

Participants should:
- Be 55 years or older
- Have memory impairment or dementia
- Live at home with a caregiver/study partner

To sign up for the Light study:
Contact: Ellen Kim
(650) 496-2578
RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Longitudinal Sleep Study

This observational study is designed to look at sleep/wake patterns in persons with memory problems over the course of time.

This study will collect a 1 week record of your sleep once a year, and will be conducted in your own home. No treatment is involved.

Participants should:
• Be 55 years or older
• Have memory impairment or dementia
• Live at home with a caregiver/study partner

To sign up for this study
Contact: Deryl Wicks
(650) 493-5000 ext 64052

Memory Screening

This observational study is designed to look at sleep/wake patterns in persons with memory problems over the course of time.

This study will collect a 1 week record of your sleep once a year, and will be conducted in your own home. No treatment is involved.

Participants should:
• Be 55 years or older
• Have memory impairment or dementia
• Live at home with a caregiver/study partner

To sign up for the Free Memory Screening
Contact: (650) 852-3287

This project is developing an approach to screen for memory problems in group sessions.
Each screening session:
• Begins with a brief talk on memory & aging
• Involves simple memory games many enjoy
• Reviews your results and concerns with staff

The next Memory Screening sessions are currently scheduled for the following time and place:

November 18, 10-11:30am, National Memory Screening Day, VA Palo Alto Health Care System, 3801 Miranda Avenue, Palo Alto, Building 5, 4th floor conference room

To sign up for this study
Contact: Deryl Wicks
(650) 493-5000 ext 64052

Memory Screening

To sign up for the Free Memory Screening
Contact: (650) 852-3287
Are You Getting Enough Sleep?

Sleep loss has a significant impact on both societal health and economic well-being. Poor sleep can lead to problems with almost all aspects of health, including cardiovascular function (heart attacks), endocrine systems (diabetes), and the nervous system (memory deficits). Sleep loss costs U.S. employers an estimated $18 billion in lost direct productivity each year and the overall impact of daytime sleepiness and sleep disorders on the national economy is estimated to be $100 billion annually. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, vehicle crashes due to driver fatigue alone cost Americans $12.5 billion per year in reduced productivity and property loss. More importantly, more than 1,500 people die every year in fatigue-related crashes.

Sleep stages

What is sleep? Each time we sleep, we go through various stages of rapid eye movement (REM) and non-REM (NREM) sleep. We start off with light sleep, going between being awake and entering sleep (NREM Stage 1). As we begin onset of sleep, our breathing and heart rate become regular, and our body temperature goes down (NREM Stage 2). In our deepest sleep, blood pressure drops, breathing is slower, and hormones are released for growth and development (NREM Stage 3 & 4). These four NREM stages of sleep take up 75% of our nightly sleep, with the relative amount of Stage 3 & 4 being drastically reduced in older individuals. The other 25% is devoted to REM sleep, which usually first occurs 90 minutes after falling asleep and increases in amount over the latter part of the night. During REM sleep, your body is immobilized, but your brain activity is similar to a wake state. In this state, dreams are most likely to occur and the eponymous rapid eye movements (darting back and forth) take place.

How much is enough sleep? This varies from person to person but generally adults need seven to nine hours. Total sleep time declines slightly with age, but there is a dramatic reduction in the deepest sleep (NREM Stage 3 & 4). There is also a significant reduction in older individuals’ abilities to stay asleep for a full seven to nine hours each night. This often results in excessive daytime fatigue, napping, increased memory problems, and a reduced ability to have positive social interactions.

Common disrupters and tips on sleep

The most common disrupters of sleep are sleep apnea and insomnia. People with sleep apnea often snore loudly, stop breathing or gasp for breath during sleep, feel sleepy or doze off inappropriately during the day. Insomnia can be caused by many factors: psychological, biological, and behavioral. Many of the causes of insomnia can be remedied by simple changes in lifestyle, including avoiding caffeine close to bedtime, avoiding alcohol, regular exercise (completed at least 3 hours before bedtime), establishing a regular relaxing bedtime routine, and creation of a sleep-conducive environment that is dark, quiet, cool, and comfortable.

Sleep in older adults

As individuals advance in age, there are changes in the amounts and manner in which people sleep. The total amount of sleep per day decreases to six or seven hours and daytime napping is often increased. Such an increase in napping also leads to even more fragmented and less nighttime sleep. Older individuals have a reduced ability to “screen-out” environmental stimuli during sleep (e.g., random noises, sunrise), which further exacerbates sleep disruption. This type of continuous sleep disruption has a significant, negative effect on the social and medical well-being of many older adults.

The Research Center at the Palo Alto VA is testing a novel drug therapy to treat sleep disruptions in older individuals by promoting daytime wakefulness. By reducing or preventing napping, we hope to increase the amount of nighttime sleep and increase daytime alertness and memory performance. If you are interested in learning more about this, please contact Mr. Ban Ku at 650-849-1971.
Memory Walk

We are on the MOVE to end Alzheimer’s disease!

The Alzheimer’s Association is holding their yearly Memory Walk on Saturday, October 11, 2008 at Treasure Island in San Francisco. Memory Walk is a national fund-raising event of the Alzheimer’s Association that helps raise money to fight Alzheimer’s disease as well as help people who are currently living with the disease. Since 1989, Memory Walk has raised over $225 million for the fight to end Alzheimer’s.

Memory Walk is a fun and noncompetitive walk. It is an activity that has been enjoyed by people of all ages across the nation. Locally it is a 3 mile walk (or 1.5 mile shortcut) around Treasure Island with a gorgeous view of the San Francisco Bay.

This year, once again, we are doing our part to combat Alzheimer’s! Co-captains, Vika Samarina and Ban Ku, have gathered members from our center and created the Stanford/VA Team that will be walking at Treasure Island. The team’s goal is to get as many walkers as possible to join us, and raise $5,000 to help fight Alzheimer’s disease. So please come out and join us Saturday, October 11 at 9:30am!

If you would like to join the Stanford/VA Team or donate to help us reach our goal, please contact Vika at vsamarina@stanford.edu or (650) 849-0491, or Ban at bankusan@gmail.com or (650) 849-1971. 🧡

Make a difference: Help end Alzheimer’s Disease!

A contribution to the Aging Clinical Research Center is a gift to future generations in our quest to cure Alzheimer’s disease. Your generous support ensures that the Center continues to conduct top-quality clinical research to improve treatment options and to provide education and support for patients and families. With your help, our clinical researchers investigate the causes of memory loss and neurodegeneration, develop and test better treatments for Alzheimer’s disease, and share these discoveries with the local community and with scientists around the world.

Tax-deductible contributions can be made by check, payable to: Stanford University
Please indicate Stanford/VA Aging Clinical Research Center in the memo line.

Mail your contributions to:

Jerome Yesavage, MD, Director (151Y)
Stanford/VA Aging Clinical Research Center
3801 Miranda Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94304

Gifts may be made in honor of someone’s special occasion or in memory of someone who has passed away. Please provide the name of the person you wish to honor, as well as the name and address of anyone whom you wish to receive an acknowledgement of the gift.

For additional information about the Stanford/VA Aging Clinical Research Center and opportunities to contribute, call (650) 852-3287. All donations are tax-deductible. 🧡
UPCOMING EVENTS

Treasure Island Memory Walk
Saturday, October 11, 2008, 9:00 am - Noon, Treasure Island, San Francisco, CA

The Alzheimer's Association Memory Walk® is the nation’s largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer care, support and research – and it calls on volunteers of all ages to become champions in the fight against this fatal disease. To support the Stanford/VA Memory Walk Team, contact Vika Samarina at vsamarina@stanford.edu or 650-849-0491 or Ban Ku at bankusan@gmail.com or (650) 849-1971.

Circle of Care Conference
Saturday, November 22, 2008, 8:30 am - 3:00 pm, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Foster City, CA

The Circle of Care Conference provides the opportunity for families and care professionals to:

* Engage in the latest research from prominent experts of Alzheimer's disease and dementia
* Connect with other family members and professionals
* Explore resources that foster wellness for total mind, body and spirit

For more information, contact the Alzheimer's Association at (650) 962-8111 or education@alznorcal.org

Memory Screening Day
Tuesday, November 18, 2008 10am-11:30am, VA Palo Alto Health Care System, 3801 Miranda Avenue, Palo Alto, CA in Building 5, 4th floor conference room.

National Memory Screening Day is part of a national effort to promote early detection of Alzheimer’s disease and related illnesses, and to encourage appropriate intervention, including medical treatments, social services and other resources. Memory screenings are a significant first step toward early diagnosis.

To register for a memory screening at the Stanford/VA Aging Clinical Research Center, call (650) 852-3287.