

Alzheimer's & dementia: Two separate conditions, equally challenging to diagnose

Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia are common and preventable, but there is a great deal that is not known about them, making them very challenging to diagnose and treat.

Alzheimer's disease and dementia are often considered the same thing, when in fact there is a significant distinction between the two that can lead to confusion on the part of patients, families, and caregivers.¹

Dementia is a brain disorder that affects communication and performance of daily activities, while Alzheimer's disease is a form of dementia that specifically affects parts of the brain that control thought, memory, and language.

Alzheimer's disease is responsible for nearly 70 percent of all dementia cases, with symptoms that include impaired thought, impaired speech, and confusion. Doctors screen for the cause of any dementia (including those caused by Alzheimer's) with blood tests, mental status evaluations, and brain scans.

While dementia refers to the symptoms of a brain disorder, Alzheimer's is a specific condition that causes those same symptoms. And while some forms of dementia are reversible or treatable, Alzheimer's is not.

Ultimately, these conditions are known to have broad and significant effects not only on the patient but also on the patient's extended network of family and caregivers. That's why medical doctors and mental health professionals agree that patience and compassionate care are critical components of any treatment plan.

Research also shows that Alzheimer's is misdiagnosed as much as 24 percent of the time.² If you are concerned about the accuracy of any neurodegenerative disease diagnosis, such as Alzheimer's or other dementia, an expert second opinion should always be obtained.

Talking to your doctor about any concerns or questions you may have about these conditions is your first step. But if you are diagnosed with Alzheimer's or any other form of dementia, your Best Doctors benefit gives you the option of an informed, objective second medical opinion in a detailed, easy-to-read report.

¹<https://www.alzheimers.net/difference-between-alzheimers-and-dementia/>

²<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20170630/Study-highlights-rate-of-misdiagnosis-in-Alzheimers-disease-patients-with-psychosis.aspx>

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