



The Masterpiece Living Mosaic

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What is the Difference Between Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease?

By: Dr. Rob Winningham

I am frequently asked the question “What is the difference between dementia and Alzheimer's Disease?” The answer is quite simple: Alzheimer's Disease is simply a *type* of dementia, actually the most common type of dementia. There are many different types of dementia, but the majority of cases are probably of the Alzheimer's type. As you probably know, dementia is a term used to describe memory and cognitive impairment that is severe enough to negatively affect quality of life.

The second most common cause of dementia is Vascular Dementia, which is caused by a stroke. Other types of dementia include, but are not limited to: Dementia with Lewy Bodies, Frontotemporal dementias (e.g., Pick's Disease), Parkinson's-related dementia, HIV-related dementia, Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus and Wernicke-Korsakoff Dementia. It appears that each type of dementia is associated with a slightly different set of symptoms. Experienced geriatric professionals can get quite good at differentiating the types of dementia, but unfortunately, in many areas, there is a shortage of such professionals.

While we still have not found a cure for dementia, there are many lifestyle behaviors that seem to be associated with a significant reduction in the likelihood of developing symptoms of dementia. These are buffering factors, or things that are associated with reduced likelihood of developing dementia:

Physical exercise (including aerobic exercise)

Cognitive exercise

Eating more fish or taking fish oil supplements

Maintaining a healthy weight

Avoiding diabetes

Being socially engaged

While most types of dementia are not currently reversible, there is a condition that looks like dementia but it is not, and that is known as *delirium*. Common causes of delirium include infection (urinary tract infections are a common cause in hospital and skilled nursing settings, dehydration, and pharmacological side effects). If you notice a fairly rapid change in cognition (e.g., inability to focus attention, wandering or incomprehensible language, difficulty understanding speech, changes in sleep patterns, etc.), it is important to get the person evaluated by a medical professional.

Anyone concerned about possible dementia should talk with their doctor. A great place to get more information about dementia is the Alzheimer's Association. Visit their website at www.alz.org or try contacting a regional chapter of the association.



Learn Something New

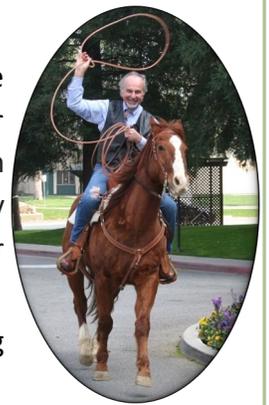
By: Dr. Roger Landry, MD, MPH

Most of what they told us in medical school about the brain . . . was wrong! Back then, the prevailing belief was that once we reached physical maturity, our brains ceased to make new brain tissue. We thought that aging gradually depleted the neurons of our brains, leading to dementia. Fortunately, that is not the case. We now know that our brains are not the static organs we once thought they were. They are actually dynamic and have the incredible potential for growing, rewiring and healing through neurogenesis (making new neurons) and neuroplasticity (building new neural pathways).

In fact, you can build new brain tissue and reduce the risk of dementia through physical activity, proper rest, a Mediterranean-type diet and by learning new things. That last one is critical ... *learning new things*.

Think of the brain as a superhighway of interconnected roads (neural pathways). Each time we learn something new, messages travel like cars along these pathways, building stronger and faster connections to help us reach our destination. Keep doing it, and you've soon created a better, faster freeway to get there. But *stop* using that road, and eventually potholes develop and you won't be able to get there as fast or at all. In order for neurogenesis to work, we must keep learning.

This is me in the photo learning to lasso! Learn something new today, and have fun doing it. [CLICK HERE](#) to watch this short video from Dr. Roger on combating Alzheimer's Disease.



'Use It or Lose It' - Eleanor Gordon Shares Her Take on Brain Boosters

By: Danielle Palli



"Use it or lose it," is Eleanor Gordon's response when asked why she regularly attends the Brain Boosters class, now in its fourth year at Someren Glen (a Lifeplan Community). "Dementia runs rampant in my family tree," she told the Mosaic. "I started to notice slight memory impairment in myself and joined the class." Since then, she believes her memory has gotten better. "I know my memory has certainly *not* gotten any

worse!" (Her doctor has confirmed that.)

Research continually demonstrates that brain training pursuits can help prevent the progression of dementia and support improved executive functioning in our brains (e.g. memory, decision-making, attention and inhibition). There is also further evidence that social connection is linked to a reduced likelihood of developing dementia.

Brain Boosters is a weekly class that includes a variety of brain challenges, including Dr. Rob Winningham's Theory of Mind, Word Generation, Social and Spatial exercises, along with many others. Participants even get homework (*Yes, homework!*) which may involve reading an article related to brain health and completing an exercise such as a Sudoku puzzle or anagram. "We have one exercise that we do in class called *Ten Things on a Tray*," Eleanor shared. "We are shown the tray at the beginning of class and have to see how many items we remember were on that tray at the end of class. I used to be so proud when I could get four or five. Now, I average eight or nine and sometimes even ten."

Eleanor is a Brain Boosters cheerleader, and is always inviting new residents to class. "It's not just about exercising our brains," she says. "It's about fellowship and fun ... we have so much fun in class."

