

# Active Minds

*A program to sharpen your mind*

**Active Minds Newsletter**

**Issue 9 - September 2007**



## **Mild Cognitive Impairment and Alzheimer's Disease**

**In this issue, Dr. Michelon tells you about .....**

**Do you want to stay mentally sharp and/or increase your brain power?**

**Do your residents need mental stimulation?**

**Are your clients interested in a Memory Workshop?**

Contact Dr. Michelon to schedule a group or an individual trial session!

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For more info on mental workouts visit:

[www.asharpermind.com](http://www.asharpermind.com)

## **Mild Cognitive Impairment**

### **The brain's warning light**

Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) can be considered as the transition phase between normal memory and Alzheimer's disease.

### **What is MCI?**

MCI is usually divided into two broad subtypes. Amnesic MCI significantly affects memory. Non-amnesic MCI affects other functions of the brain such as language, attention and reasoning. Most of the research has focussed on Amnesic MCI, which has been linked to Alzheimer's disease. The following criteria are usually used to diagnose amnesic MCI:

- Memory complaint, preferably corroborated by another person
- Poor performance on memory tests
- Normal performance on tests of other cognitive domains (language, attention, executive functions, verbal ability)
- Largely normal activities of daily living
- No dementia

### **Do I have MCI?**

Many people nowadays live with MCI without knowing it. How can you dissociate mem-

ory lapses associated with normal aging and memory problems associated with MCI? A good way to dissociate the two is the degree and frequency of the episodes of forgetfulness.

The forgetfulness of normal aging is minor. You forget where you put your car keys or where you parked your car in the parking garage. You cannot remember the name of a former co-worker when you meet unexpectedly at the grocery store. This is nothing to worry about.

But red flags should go up if you start forgetting things you typically remember, such as doctor's appointments or your weekly bridge game. This happens to everyone now and then, but if a pattern develops, it could be a symptom of MCI.

Although people feel that they are the best judges of the state of their memory, this is often not true. The perception of forgetfulness tends to vary from person to person. Someone who is scrupulous about her mental functioning and is proud of her memory may notice very slight changes in her memory. She will then overestimate her forgetfulness. On the other hand, someone who lives a simple routine life may miss significant memory changes. He will then underestimate his forgetfulness. Very often a more objective assessment of your memory will come from someone you trust and knows you well.

The best way to know for sure whether one has MCI is to undergo testing with a neurop-

ychologist. The doctor will use simple behavioral tests to determine whether memory is indeed affected and if it is, whether other domains of cognition are also affected.

### **MCI and Alzheimer's disease**

If I show signs of MCI, what are the chances that I will develop Alzheimer's disease?

Research has shown that out of 100 people with normal memory, only one or two a year would develop AD. In sharp contrast, out of 100 people showing signs of MCI, 15 will develop AD per year.

Experts estimate that over longer periods of time, 80 to 90% of people with MCI will develop AD. Note that 10% will not. Why? Research is on-going...

The recent discovery of MCI has led researchers to look for a drug that would prevent AD from developing. Many studies are being conducted and experts are confident that in the next 10-15 years major breakthroughs will be achieved.

### **What can I do if I have MCI?**

Experts have good news! They suggest that adopting a healthy life-style (healthy diet, enough sleep, enough physical exercise, less stress, appropriate weight and cholesterol level, etc.) and regularly participating in challenging intellectual activities may be able to alter the course of MCI.