

Alzheimer's in the Aged

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Dr. JoEllen Pederson

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The process of aging has many affects; for some, it's as little as their hair turning gray and wrinkles appearing of their skin. Aging affects individuals physically, there is a decline in function of the senses which affects the performance of daily activities, they become frail, and there is an increase in possibility to obtaining disease or disability. "In fact, advancing age is the major risk factor for a number of chronic diseases in humans" (*UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF THE AGING PROCESS*, para. 1). Alzheimer's is a disease that more common in the aged rather than the young; there are 6 million Americans of any age that suffer from Alzheimer's. In 2023, there is an estimated 6.7 million Americans that are 65 years old and older that have the disease. 73% of the 6.7 million individuals are said to be 75 years old and older (Alzheimer's Association, 2023).

"Alzheimer's disease is a type of dementia that affects memory, thinking and behavior. Symptoms eventually grow severe enough to interfere with daily tasks" (It & Know, 1986). Alzheimer's is a disease that usually affects the aged, 60 years old and older. The greatest know risk factor to obtaining Alzheimer's is aging (It & Know, 1986). Alzheimer's disease is a neurodegenerative progressive disease which means it gets worse with the older someone ages (Joe & Ringman, 2019). The symptomology of Alzheimer's disease includes memory loss that affects daily life, bad decision making, not knowing where they are, not knowing what day it is, the repeating of questions, forgetting information they just learned, etc (*National Institute on Aging*, 2022). Alzheimer's disease has been around for over 100 years, like mentioned before, in 2023 it is estimated that there are 6.7 million individuals in the United States that are 65 years old and older who have Alzheimer's (Alzheimer's Association, 2023). Regarding mortality when looking at Alzheimer's disease, the life expectancy for someone with the disease at or around 65 years old is eight to 10 years; the life expectancy diagnosed with the disease who is older, in their

80s or older, is much less (*The later stage of dementia*, 2021). When looking at morbidity rates among the aged with this disease, 1 in every 3 seniors die; Alzheimer's disease kills more than those suffering from cancer's such as breast cancer or prostate cancer combined (Alzheimer's Association, 2023). Seniors who are 70 years of age, who have Alzheimer's are "twice as likely to die before age 80 than those who do not have the disease" (Alzheimer's Association, 2023). Also stated from this article, "People age 65 and older survive an average of four to eight years after a diagnosis of Alzheimer's, yet some live as long as 20 years old, this reflects the slow and uncertainty progression of the disease" (Alzheimer's Association, 2023).

While it is now known that Alzheimer's disease affects mainly the older population, it disproportionately affects women and certain ethnic groups. Alzheimer's may disproportionately affect women because women live longer than men (Alzheimer's Society, 2023). Two-thirds of the individuals in the United States suffering from Alzheimer's disease are women (Alzheimer's Association, 2023). Older Black Americans are twice as likely to have Alzheimer's disease than older Whites and older Hispanic Americans "are one and one-half times as likely to have Alzheimer's or other dementias as older Whites (Alzheimer's Association, 2023). A study conducted at the University of Miami examined the risk factors related to Alzheimer's and racial ethnic groups and found that "African Americans and Hispanics have greater vulnerability to Alzheimer's because of vascular risks and socioeconomic factors" (Hemlock, 2022). The socioeconomic factors include inequalities related to income, health insurance, and access to any medical care; the incapability to access health care leads to "an accumulation of vascular risk factors in midlife (Hemlock, 2022). Vascular risks are higher among people who are poor and have less access to resources, which leads to them have a higher risk for Alzheimer's in older age. "Simply put, poverty proved the underlying determinant of disparities, not race or ethnicity,

the data showed. Because poor people have less access to health care, education, healthy food, and other resources throughout their lives, they're more likely to develop obesity, frailty, diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, and other vascular risk factors that boost their chances for Alzheimer's in their later years (Hemlock, 2022, para. 6).

In order to alleviate these disproportionately affected groups, policies set need to interfere with their early life to decrease the chances of them getting Alzheimer's once they are older. Early life factors such as inequalities within income, health insurance, and incapability to access health care lead to Alzheimers in later life. Policies granting the disproportionately affected groups, African Americans and Hispanics, equal economic pay and access to health insurance and access to health care need to be implemented into our government to reduce the risk of Alzheimers. There needs to be policies implemented that specifically say, "There is to be equal base pay among all U.S. citizens within a business", "Each child in the U.S. will receive the same education while in public schools", and "Each individual, as a United States citizen, should have access to health insurance and health care." There are laws and policies implemented in today's government and society that prohibit the discrimination towards racial and ethnic groups. These laws and policies need to be more specific to ensure that there are no inequalities in income, health insurance, and health care between ethnic groups. By alleviating these social factors that are separating our health outcomes, as we are all human and therefore should have the same chances of coming down with a disease or life expectancy, we could decrease the chances and statistics that African Americans and Hispanics are more likely to have Alzheimer's in old age.

Alzheimer's disease is a disease that disproportionately affects the aged. This disease causes individuals to have memory loss, confusion, difficulties with thinking and behavior, etc.

This disease affects the individual so much that it soon becomes difficult to complete daily tasks. It has been found that Alzheimers is more likely in specific groups such as women, Blacks, and Hispanics. Social factors such as inequalities in income, inability to access health insurance and health care, and lack of education can increase the likelihood of having Alzheimers in old age. While there is no cure to this disease, policies should be implemented to create equal opportunities for all racial groups so that each individual has an equal percentage of possibly having Alzheimers.

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