

# “Cognitive Ability (Decline) & Social Isolation”

May 5, 2018

Women’s Health Council of RI

Doreen C. Putnam, CDP, CIPG  
DCPutnam Consulting

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



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# Cognitive Ability

“Cognitive abilities are brain-based skills we need to carry out any task.... They have more to do with the mechanisms of how we learn, remember, problem-solve, and pay attention, rather with any actual knowledge.”

<https://sharpebrains.com>



# Cognitive Process:

- Executive Functions – Mental Process that Allows us to Connect the Past with the Present and the Future
- Losses that disrupts daily lives
- Person's Ability to Think, Remember, Reason, Plan, Organize, Implement Ideas, Problem Solve and Retain Information



# Dementia

“Dementia is a general term that describes a group of symptoms - such as loss of memory, judgment, language, complex motor skills, and other intellectual functions - caused by the permanent damage or death of the brain's nerve cells, or neurons.”

It is NOT considered a DISEASE!



The Dementia Umbrella

"The Alzheimerist"®





# Causes of Cognitive Impairment

## IRREVERSIBLE forms of Dementia:

- Alzheimer's Disease (AD)
- Vascular Dementia
- Parkinsonian Dementia
- Dementia with Lewy Bodies
- Frontotemporal Degeneration (FTD)
- Mixed Dementia
- Early-Onset Alzheimer's
- Down Syndrome
- Huntington's Disease
- Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus
- Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease\*
- Korsakoff Syndrome
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE)



**“Social Isolation** as evidenced by objective indicators such as having a small social network, being unmarried, participating in few activities with others, or some combination of these, has been associated with increased risk for dementia and cognitive decline...”

Archives of General Psychiatry, Abstract, 2007





# Two Aspects of Social Isolation with Cognitive Decline

Alzheimer's Disease - Early On-set AD

FTD - Frontotemporal Degeneration



# 10 WARNING SIGNS OF AD / D

As Identified by the Alzheimer's Association

1. Challenges with Problem Solving
2. Memory Loss
3. Inability to Complete Daily Tasks
4. Word Problems (and Financial Issues)
5. Problems with Time and Place
6. Misplacing Items
7. Decreased or Poor Judgment
8. Personality Changes
- 9. Isolation**
10. Visual Images and Perceptual Changes



## 9. Isolation:

- ❖ Can take place in the home, at work or in social settings
- ❖ As their “comfort zone” shrinks, they will withdraw
- ❖ Fearful friends or family will discover what is happening
- ❖ Embarrassed / Humiliated / Confused about situation
- ❖ Withdraw from leisure activities they have always loved
- ❖ Refuse to participate in family events



# Alzheimer's Disease - Early On-set AA

Hippocampus: Two small portions of the brain; Located in each hemisphere

- \*\* This portion of the brain stores short term memories
- \*\* AD/D patients experience memory loss and lose their ability to remember what has happened within the past hours, days, weeks, months and finally years.
- \*\* Forgetfulness (Temporary) moves to Memory loss (Permanent)
- \*\* Isolation occurs due to their embarrassment and attempts to protect themselves & others from knowing what is happening during the early stages of the disease



# FTD - Frontotemporal Degeneration

## Frontal Lobe and L & R Temporal Lobes of the Brain

- \*\* FTD has distinct variants that impact: Language (PPA, Pick's Disease), Behavior (bvFTD) and Movement (CBS, PSP, FTD-ALS)
- \*\* Language Variant – Can't understand words; Difficulty retrieving words; Halting speech; Omit linking words (to, from, the)
- \*\* As disease progresses, they withdraw because they can't participate in logical conversations or complex social settings and this increases isolation



# Summarize

Cognitive loss is caused by various medical conditions, depending on the area of the brain that is impacted

Isolation occurs in the early stages of AD/D due to memory loss and is a warning sign of cognitive decline taking place

Isolation occurs as the various forms of dementia progress due to significantly reduced/non-existent communication skills





DCPutnam Consulting – [www.dcpurtnamconsulting.com](http://www.dcpurtnamconsulting.com)

Alzheimer's Association - [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)

***“The 36 Hour Day”***

Dr. Peter Rabins    &    Nancy Mace, RN  
John Hopkins University School of Medicine



Dr. Lisa Genova – Author of

“Still Alice”

“Love Anthony”

“Inside the O’Brien’s”

“Left Neglected”

“Learning to Speak Alzheimer’s”  
by Dr. Robert N. Butler



# Thank You

Doreen C. Putnam, CDP, CIPG  
DCPutnam Consulting

[www.dcputnamconsulting.com](http://www.dcputnamconsulting.com)  
[doreen@dcputnamconsulting.com](mailto:doreen@dcputnamconsulting.com)

