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<https://www.who.int/podcasts/episode/science-in-5/episode--122---dementia>

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Dementia

Awareness & Challenges

Speaker key

- **KS** Katrin Seeher.
- **VGS** Vismita Gupta-Smith.

PODCAST Transcript

VGS: Is dementia a normal part of ageing?

KS: Research is ongoing into a possible cure, there are things that we can do to reduce our risk.

VGS: Are these symptoms I should worry about?

There is a condition that will impact all of us in our lifetime, whether as patients or as caregivers. And someone gets this condition every three seconds. We are talking about dementia today with Dr. Katrin Seeher. Welcome Katrin,

What are the symptoms of dementia?

KS: Well, first, dementia is an umbrella term for many different diseases that destroy nerve cells and damage the brain. The most common cause of dementia is Alzheimer's disease. Dementia typically leads to memory loss and cognitive decline such as forgetting words, forgetting where you kept things, easily getting lost, or having problems following a conversation or performing a usual task. Dementia also often occurs with mood or behavior changes and over time, the symptoms get worse so that someone who is living with dementia may require more and more help from their family and loved ones to perform daily tasks.

VGS: So Katrin, is this, is dementia a normal part of ageing?

KS : No, it is not a normal part of ageing. Two in three people in their 90s don't have dementia. It is a medical condition of the brain and even people in their 40s and 50s can get dementia.

VGS: This is a bit concerning because you know, sometimes I'll come into a room and I'll forget why I came in there and I'll often misplace my keys. Are these symptoms I should worry about?

KS: Well, not necessarily, we all do forget things from time to time. You might forget where you kept your keys but not knowing what a key is for is a completely different story. Or you might forget why you entered a room because you were distracted, or you were multitasking. If you are concerned, speak to your healthcare professional, they can run additional tests and investigate further.

VGS: So is there a cure for dementia and what treatments are available?

KS: Well, currently there is no cure for dementia. There are some medicines that help some people to manage their symptoms for a while, but they don't treat the underlying cause of dementia. Research is ongoing into a possible cure, but it will be a while before we can deliver those treatments safely and widely. Still, it is important to receive an early diagnosis because that helps you to make sense of the symptoms that your or a family member might be experiencing and then you can plan for the future. And I do encourage everyone who lives with dementia to lead an as active life as possible, physically, mentally and socially because that will help you to remain independent and maintain good quality of life for longer.

VGS: So Katrin, if there is a history of dementia in my family, should I be worried that I might get it too? And what can I do to prevent it?

KS Usually, dementia is not passed down within families. But what you might share with family members are conditions that make you more likely to develop dementia. Such as having hypertension or diabetes, or smoking, unhealthy diets or living in an area with high air pollution. Unlike with genes, there are things that we can do to prevent or reduce our risk of developing dementia. What's good for your heart is good for your brain. So be physically active, eat healthily, treat conditions such as hypertension or diabetes. And the other important message is, throughout life, train your brain and protect it from injuries. So, for instance, learn a new language, meet friends or go dancing. All these activities stimulate your brain and help formulate new and stronger connections between nerve cells and ultimately help you fight off disease.

VGS: Well thank you very much for sharing that with us, Katrin. Until next time then, stay safe, stay healthy and stick with science.

End of script

As for Dementia & Alzheimer's Disease in Egypt and the Arab world, According to a study published in the National Library of Medicine, 2017 out of reviewing the literature regarding dementia prevalence in Egypt. They found that with the growing prevalence of dementia worldwide, two-thirds of the people with dementia are projected to be from developing countries by 2050. Results showed that, out of the 1,630 references retrieved, six studies (n=28,029 participants) met the study inclusion criteria. In all studies, dementia was ascertained using a three-phase survey (Phase I: screening, Phase II: clinical diagnosis, Phase III: laboratory investigations). The dementia prevalence ranged from 2.01% to 5.07%. Dementia increases with age, with a rapid increase among those aged ≥ 80 . Also, its prevalence was higher among illiterate groups than among educated groups. The studies included were of low risk of bias. Researchers concluded that Dementia prevalence in Egypt demands including people with dementia in the health care system and promoting the awareness of dementia among the public. Also, more epidemiological studies in this field are needed.

Meanwhile, a study aimed to estimate dementia prevalence and cost in Arab countries for 2021, where updated economic impact data are scarce. Understanding its prevalence and cost was & still is crucial for effective policies and support systems. Results showed the highest dementia prevalence among those aged more than 60 years was in Lebanon (4.88%), Tunisia

(4.43%) and Algeria (4.19%). The total direct cost in the Arab region was \$8.18 billion for those over 50 years old. Indirect costs ranged from \$2.25 billion (best case) to \$5.67 billion (worst case), with a mean value of \$3.98 billion. Total dementia care costs (direct and indirect) under the mean scenario for the entire Arab world amounted to \$12.17 billion, with costs as a percentage of GDP ranging from 0.05% (Sudan) to 0.44% (Lebanon). Researchers highlighted dementia as a growing public health issue in the Arab world, with 1,329,729 individuals affected in 2021 and total costs between \$10.43 billion and \$13.90 billion. The findings emphasized the urgent need for investment in research and specialized services for older adults, particularly those with dementia.

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