



# BRAIN HEALTH BULLETIN

*From Dementia Care Specialists, ADRC Southwest Wisconsin  
1st Quarter 2025*

## Upcoming Events

February - April  
Subject to Change

### February 12

11:00 AM

Memory Screens

Lancaster, WI

### March 4

10:00 AM

Memory Screens,

Mineral Point, WI

10:00 AM Memory

Screens,

Platteville, WI

### March 7

10:00 AM

Memory Cafe

Lancaster, WI

### March 14

9:30 AM

Healthy Living with

Mild Cognitive

Impairment

Monroe & Lancaster

### March 19

1:00 PM

Memory Screens,

Belleville, WI

### April 4

10:00 AM Memory

Cafe, Lancaster, WI



## Brain Health Breakdown

### The Link Between Hearing Loss and Brain Health:

#### Understanding the Connection

Hearing loss is a common condition that impacts millions of people worldwide, but its impact extends beyond the ears. Recent research has revealed a significant link between hearing loss and brain health, suggesting that untreated hearing impairment may contribute to cognitive decline and dementia.

Our brains are constantly processing sensory information from the environment, with hearing playing a key role in communication, social interaction, and overall cognitive functioning. When hearing loss occurs, the brain's auditory processing centers are no longer receiving the same amount or quality of information they once did.

This may lead to several outcomes:

1. Decreased cognitive function: When a person struggles to hear, they often have to use more brain power to understand what is being said, which can lead to cognitive fatigue. Over time, this mental load can deplete cognitive resources, potentially impacting memory and concentration.

2. Social Isolation and Depression: Hearing loss can make communication challenging, potentially leading to frustration and withdrawal from social activities or outings. This isolation is associated with depression, which is a known risk factor for cognitive decline and dementia. Loneliness can also amplify the impacts of hearing loss on brain health, as meaningful interactions are crucial for maintaining cognitive function.

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#### Disclaimer:

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3. Increased Risk of Dementia: Numerous studies have shown that untreated hearing loss is linked to an increased risk of developing dementia. A study published in JAMA Neurology found that people with untreated mild hearing loss were twice as likely to develop a dementia, while those with untreated severe hearing loss were five times more likely. Researchers believe that the brain's effort to compensate for hearing loss may contribute to the brain's breakdown, accelerating cognitive decline.

Given the potential impact of hearing loss on brain health, early detection and intervention are essential. There are several strategies for preventing or mitigating the effects of hearing loss on cognitive function, such as utilizing hearing aids or assistive devices if needed, regular hearing checkups, engaging in social activities, and living a brain-healthy lifestyle.

The growing body of research linking hearing loss with brain health highlights the importance of addressing hearing impairment early on. Untreated hearing loss can have effects on cognitive function, contributing to social isolation, cognitive fatigue, and an increased risk of dementia. By taking proactive steps to manage hearing loss and maintain overall brain health, individuals may significantly reduce the risk of cognitive decline. Regular hearing screenings, the use of hearing aids, and an active, engaged lifestyle are all key components in protecting both hearing and brain health for the future.

## Technology Toolbox

Gifts for those caring for and those with Memory Loss

### **CareZone**

(Free) This app essentially allows a caregiver to enter and access all of a senior's medical information in one place. If family members download the app, you can grant them access to the information, too. CareZone also includes the capability to note when appointments are coming up, store insurance information, create to-do lists and document symptoms. This app is available on both Android and iOS devices.

### **SuperCook**

(Free) Supercook is a recipe search engine that lets you search by ingredients you have at home. Find thousands of recipes you can make right now with the ingredients you have in your home.

### **About the DCS**

The ADRC of Southwest Wisconsin maintains a Dementia Care Specialist Program as part of the Dementia-Capable Wisconsin Initiative that was prompted by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. The DCS works one-on-one with people with dementia or cognition concerns, their caregivers, or their family members to provide support, education, and resources to ensure the highest quality of life possible while living in the community. Additionally, the DCS serves as a community resource to provide education and training to local businesses, facilitate caregiver support groups, and lead educational classes for caregivers and community members. The DCS is a catalyst in the dementia-friendly initiative and works to raise awareness of the unique needs of people with cognitive concerns and dementia.

# Dementia Digest

## Facts and Updates

### **AI speech analysis predicted progression of cognitive impairment to Alzheimer's with over 78% accuracy**



An artificial intelligence (AI) model analyzing transcripts of speech from past cognitive tests predicted the progression of cognitive impairment to Alzheimer's disease within six years with more than 78% accuracy. The NIA-funded study results were published in *Alzheimer's and Dementia*. This study was part of a series conducted by a Boston University-led research team seeking to fine-tune and expand usage of their speech analysis AI as a potential tool to automate elements of dementia diagnosis.

### **Wildfire smoke exposure and dementia risk**

An NIH-funded research team, led by Dr. Joan Casey of the University of Washington School of Public Health, compared the links between exposure to PM2.5 from wildfires or other sources and new cases of dementia. Long-term exposure to fine particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5), a type of air pollution, has been linked to an increased risk of dementia. In the Western United States, wildfires are becoming a common source of airborne PM2.5. But it isn't clear whether the fine particles from wildfires confer a similar dementia risk to those from other sources.



### **SHIMMER Trial Reports Positive Results**



Cognition Therapeutics reported encouraging topline results from their Phase 2 clinical trial of CT1812, an investigational drug being studied in people with dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB). An early phase trial funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the SHIMMER study met its primary endpoints of demonstrating safety and tolerability. Further, improvements were seen in behavioral, functional, cognitive and movement measures.

### **Perspectives in FTD Research: FTD Research '24 - Where We've Come From & Where We're Headed**

The science of FTD is evolving at a rapid pace and it can be difficult to interpret the scientific advancements and how they may impact families facing an FTD diagnosis. In this Perspectives in FTD Research webinar, presented jointly by AFTD and the FTD Disorders Registry, AFTD's Senior Director of Scientific Initiatives, Penny Dacks, PhD, is joined by guest speakers Brad Dickerson, MD (Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital, and Rosa Rademakers, PhD (University of Antwerp and Mayo Clinic). Drs. Dacks, Dickerson, and Rademakers discuss exciting advancements in FTD research and how scientific breakthroughs are bringing us closer to effective treatments for FTD.





## Ask the DCS

**Question: What are some safety considerations for people with dementia with the winter weather upon us?**

**Answer:** Yes, winter weather is upon us and it is important to be aware of some safety concerns and the measures to take to help keep someone with dementia safe! Some areas of concern include hypothermia, wandering, hazards in the home, and falls.

Hypothermia is a concern for people with dementia because they may have challenges in detecting temperature and being aware of the weather conditions. These challenges can lead to safety concerns such as an individual setting their thermostat too low or not dressing warm enough for the weather. Some individuals with dementia may also wander outside of the house. Hypothermia and other safety concerns arise when people are wandering in the cold winter weather.

To help keep the individual with dementia safe, encourage them to dress properly for the weather including layers, a hat, scarf, and gloves to keep exposed skin protected. It may also be helpful to program the thermostat in the house so that there is adequate warmth. Other safety tips include having someone check on the individual with dementia during the day and calling the individual regularly to monitor for any changes. In addition, there are several safety-centered programs and devices available, including GPS monitoring technology, if an individual may wander outside of the home.

There are also safety concerns for individuals with dementia inside the home. Hazards may include leaving stoves on, the use of electric blankets, space heaters, and carbon monoxide poisoning. It is also important to make sure fire and carbon monoxide detectors are functioning properly.

Lastly, falls are a safety concern, especially during the winter months. Vision changes, perception problems, changes in gait, and the possible deterioration of judgment skills can lead to an increased risk of falls because an individual with dementia may not detect the dangers of ice, snow, or other winter weather hazards. Make sure the sidewalks and driveways around the individual's house are shoveled and salted. In addition, be sure that there is adequate lighting outside so individuals can see more clearly. Other measures to take to try to prevent falls during the winter include the use of proper non-skid footwear and pointed tips that can be added onto the bottom of canes.

If you need more information about winter weather safety for individuals with dementia or other assistance related to dementia, contact your local Aging & Disability Resource Center of Southwest Wisconsin at 800-514-0066. Know you are not alone!

# Caregiver Corner

"There are only four kinds of people in the world. Those who have been caregivers. Those who are currently caregivers. Those who will be caregivers, and those who will need a caregiver." — Rosalyn Carter

## **UW launches new center for dementia care interventions**

Andrea Gilmore-Bykovskiy, PhD, RN, will co-direct the Establishing Mechanisms of Benefit to Reinforce the Alzheimer's Care Experience (EMBRACE) AD/ADRD Roybal Center at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, which joins a nationwide network of 15 other NIH-funded Roybal Centers. The Center will provide critical infrastructure and resources to support the testing of mechanisms in home and community dementia care intervention trials, with the goal of delivering practical solutions at scale.



## **Caregiver Teleconnection**

The Caregiver Teleconnection program has one-hour conference calls, at no cost. These sessions cover a wide range of interesting topics related to the care you provide to your loved one. You can get expert advice, ask questions and talk to other people who are also providing care. To participate in these sessions, you can either log in using a laptop, tablet or phone. If you prefer to call in, a phone number will be provided within the Zoom registration confirmation email. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please call 1-866-390-6491 or email [caregiverteleconnection@wellmed.net](mailto:caregiverteleconnection@wellmed.net)

## **Caregiver Support Groups**

Caregiver support groups designed for family, friends, and other caregivers who are caring for a person with dementia, a chronic illness, or a disability. Groups are designed for caregivers to gain validation, emotional support, and strategies to cope and care for your loved one. If you would like to attend or would like to learn more, please contact your local ADRC. To find the most recent list of Caregiver Support Groups in the area please [click here](#).

**Make sure to Like and Follow the Dementia Care Specialist and ADRC Of Southwest WI pages on Facebook and also bookmark [adrcswwi.org](http://adrcswwi.org)! If you have any friends or clients who would benefit from getting information, please recommend this page to them!**



Contact the DCSs



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