

Seasons of Memory

Understanding Alzheimer's Disease



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Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's Research

Methods of Study in the Alzheimer's Research



Alzheimer's research is steadily growing in the amount of knowledge gleaned from various experiments and studies. Alzheimer's has gone from a complete enigma to something that can be predicted and traced in the family line. While it was once thought that the forgetting behavior was a psychological impairment of the elderly, it has now been found to have a very physical cause, one that can be slowed or even in some cases, stopped.

While most Alzheimer's research is done after the death of the patient, there are also research studies done on the patient while he or she is still alive. One of the biggest and oldest of these studies is a study of a grouping of nuns that hoped to see if environment played a factor in

the development of Alzheimer's. The reason that nuns were used in this experiment was for the similarities of lifestyle, food, and education. This meant that if one should get Alzheimer's, the whole of the nunnery would potentially get it for sharing the same environment. It was found that the environment was not the cause or preventative for Alzheimer's since the same percentage of the nuns got the disease versus those outside of the nunnery.

A very common style of Alzheimer's research is the brain scan. Damaged areas of the brain show up well on a scan of the brain and these changes can be tracked to better understand how the disease destroys the brain. By understanding how the disease works, one is able to develop a preventive or at least treatable method for controlling the disease. These brain scans are often done at the first sign of Alzheimer's and can often continue up until the burial of the patient. The brain, even dead, is scanned for clues as to how to handle and prevent the disease.

Though a cure for Alzheimer's has not yet been developed and tested, there are medications to treat the disease. Through further Alzheimer's research, a cure or prevention can and will be discovered.

