



FRIENDS CLUB NEWSLETTER



JUNE 2015

Celebrating 25 years of serving the Alzheimer's community!

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FRIENDS CLUB CELEBRATES 25 YEARS!



Members of the Friends Club family gathered in the ballroom at Congressional Country Club on April 24 for a joint celebration of 25 years serving the Alzheimer's community and of GayLynn Mann's retirement. It was lovely to see so many people who have been touched in one way or another by our Club. We are so very grateful to Chuck and Jean Weir for hosting this lovely event and to Bif Williamson for her tireless planning and vision in organizing the luncheon. We also wish to thank Elise Schoux, Robert Schulmann, Molly Tully and (surprise!) Jon Mann for their wonderful remarks. Here's to another 25 years!



Photos courtesy of Deb Lindsey, www.deblindsey.com.

Research Update

Australian researchers have had very encouraging results in a recent study where ultrasound was used to clear toxic proteins from the brains of mice with Alzheimer's disease.

The researchers are from the Queensland Brain Institute at the University of Queensland and they published their results in *Science Translational Medicine*.

Researchers used focused therapeutic ultrasound, which beams sound waves into the brain. These sound waves oscillate very quickly and are able to open the blood brain barrier and stimulate the microglia cells, which are the cells that normally get rid of beta amyloid plaques. The blood brain barrier is a layer of tissue that protects that brain from bacteria in the bloodstream, and while it is essential in preserving the health of brain tissue, getting medications to treat Alzheimer's to cross this barrier has been a long-standing challenge for drug researchers.

By stimulating the body's natural process of ridding itself of toxic proteins, the ultrasound waves fully restored the memories of 75 percent of the mice tested. There was no damage done to the surrounding brain tissue of the mice. Mice who were treated showed a better ability to navigate a maze, better ability to recognize new objects and better memory of places they should avoid.

"We're extremely excited by this innovation of treated Alzheimer's without using drug therapeutics," said researcher Jürgen Götz in a press release. "The word 'breakthrough' is often misused, but in this case I think this really does fundamentally change our understanding of how to treat this disease, and I foresee a great future for this approach."

The next step is for the researchers to test animals with higher functioning level, such as sheep. If all goes well in the next phase of animal testing, the team could be testing the treatment on humans in 2017.

This is a summary of an article that was published on www.sciencealert.com on March 18, 2015.

Feelings persist beyond memories in Alzheimer's disease

(from Alzheimer's Care Guide May/June 2015)

According to a team of scientists from the University of Iowa, for those with Alzheimer's disease (AD) feelings of sadness and happiness persist even after the memory of the events that caused such feelings has vanished.

They invited a group of AD elders to watch film clips designed to induce either sadness or happiness. Five minutes after the clips ended, they asked the elders what they did remember.

As expected, the elders had little memory of the clips. In fact, many were unable to remember any factual details, and one did not remember having watched the clips at all. Yet, they reported high levels of sadness, or happiness, that lasted for up to 30 minutes.

This phenomenon is called "feelings without memory," explains Professor Daniel Tranel, who led the study.

It means that Alzheimer's elders "are profoundly impacted emotionally by events that they cannot recall."

Not only that. In the study, "those who had the worst memory for the sad films tended to experience the most prolonged states of sadness."

This led to increased confusion and agitation, for the elders felt desperately sad but didn't know why.

What all this means is that caregivers' actions toward Alzheimer's elders "really do matter, and can significantly influence quality of life and subjective wellbeing," says Professor Tranel.

That's why it is so important "to avoid causing negative feelings and to try and induce positive emotions, with frequent visits and social interactions, exercise...music, dance, jokes and serving elders their favorite foods."



Tips on Coping with Helplessness from Caring.com

Helplessness is a common -- and frustrating -- emotion for many caregivers, especially those dealing with a disease beyond their control, such as dementia, Parkinson's, or advanced cancer. You've done what you can. But you can't change the course of the awful disease. What helps:

- 1. Avoid self-blame.** Red-flag phrases you should quit thinking: "If only I . . ." "I should have. . . ." "Why didn't I . . . ?" This is a form of negative thinking that has no upside. You can't change the past. You did the best you could, and made the best decisions you could, based on the information before you at the time.
- 2. Recognize that, sometimes, you can only stand by -- and that's OK.** Remember that sometimes there's a time for action and a time for inaction. "Doing nothing" isn't synonymous with "not caring." You wouldn't feel such anguish if you didn't care so much.
- 3. Instead of feeling frustrated about what you can't do, focus on all the good you've already done for your loved one.** It's no small or unnecessary thing to grant yourself some peace of mind from acknowledging that you've done much that's worthwhile and beneficial, and probably have done so for a very long time.
- 4. Turn your energies to improving quality of life.** How can you make your loved one more comfortable? How can you help him or her feel safe and secure? Does the person still have the mental capacity to focus on the legacy he or she hopes to leave behind.

The preceding article is by Paula Spencer Pratt, who is a contributing editor to Caring.com and is the author of Surviving Alzheimer's. A Met Life Foundation Journalists in Aging fellow, she writes extensively about health and caregiving; four of her family members have had dementia.

Upcoming Caregiver Classes

- *Effective Communication Strategies*

When: Tuesday, June 9, 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Where: Holy Cross Resource Center
9805 Dameron Drive, Room 11B
Silver Spring, MD 20010

Cost: Free

Registration: Required. Call 301-754-7150

Synopsis: Explore how communication takes place when someone has Alzheimer's disease, learn to decode their verbal and behavioral messages, and identify strategies to help you connect and communicate at each stage of the disease.

- *Understanding and Responding to Dementia-Related Behavior*

When: Tuesday, July 14, 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Where: Holy Cross Resource Center
9805 Dameron Drive, Room 11B
Silver Spring, MD 20010

Cost: Free

Registration: Required. Call 301-754-7150

Synopsis: Behavior is a means of communication. Learn to decode behavior messages, identify common behavior triggers and employ strategies to help intervene with behavioral challenges.



How to Cope When Your Loved One Says Mean Things

A couple of years ago, Alzheimer's expert Bob DeMarco wrote a fantastic article about how to manage people with dementia when they say hurtful things. He wrote the article for his website, The Alzheimer's Reading Room, and I think it is worth sharing his ideas as a reminder. DeMarco suggests keeping a written record of when your loved one's behavior becomes problematic. After a few days or weeks, you may see a pattern emerge. Keep these questions in mind when you are looking for a pattern:

- Did the behavior occur when you began talking about a particular topic?
- Did the behavior occur when your loved one was out in public or at home?
- Did the behavior occur when YOU felt overwhelmed or tired (i.e. was he reading cues from you and getting agitated?)
- Did the behavior occur at a time when your loved one may have been hungry or tired?
- Did the behavior occur after he watched a film or read a book on a particular topic?
- Does one person in the family have more trouble talking with him than another? (If so, be sure not to have that caregiver be the one that tries to coax him into doing something he doesn't want to do. Reserve that job for his favorite caregiver – if you are fortunate and have more than one.
- Was the behavior right after you got off the telephone? If so, what were you talking about?
- Was the behavior in relation to a topic that was a point of contention in your relationship before he became sick?

Caring for someone with dementia often works best if you are willing to do a little detective work and use some creativity. Do whatever you can to eliminate triggers once you realize what they are. Like all strategies for caregiving, this will not work for everyone all the time, but it will likely work for some people some of the time.

If you would like to read the full article, you can find it online at

<http://www.alzheimersreadingroom.com/2013/09/when-dementia-patients-say-mean-things.html>

New Study on Non-Drug Interventions for People with Dementia

Laura Gitlin, a pioneer in research of non-pharmaceutical ways to cope with difficult behaviors that often accompany dementia, is heading up a new study at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing. This study will evaluate ways of helping families address the challenging behaviors of people with dementia who are living at home.

Study participation involves the following:

- 3 Home Interviews with you and the person with dementia (at beginning of study, and then 3 and 6 months later)
- Random assignment to one of two groups; both groups receive up to 8 home visits with a research staff member to learn strategies that may be helpful in caring for a person with dementia
- Participation is FREE and voluntary
- Families receive up to \$45 for completing the 3 home interviews

Research into non-drug approaches to care could help scientifically prove what we have witnessed anecdotally at Friends Club for more than 25 years —improvement in quality of life and a reduction of symptoms and suffering. It could open the door for the funding and development of more dementia-specific day programs, which are so desperately needed all over the country.

SPECIAL NOTICES

Conversations at the Kreeger Museum

As some of you may already know, the Kreeger Museum, 2401 Foxhall Road, NW, Washington, DC 20007, offers two free programs a month designed specifically for people with dementia and their caregivers. The program, called Conversations, features an art talk with a musical component. It is offered at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on the second and third Monday of each month. Registration is required. Call 202-337-3050 ext. 18.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

A separate support group for caregivers of people with dementia meets the first and third Wednesday of each month from 11:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the library at the church – 6601 Bradley Blvd., Bethesda, MD 20817. For more information, call Elaine Byergo at 301-906-2520.

BIRTHDAYS

JUNE

Jerry C.	5
Jim M.	8

JULY

Art L.	6
GayLynn M.	29

AUGUST

Bernie A.	1
Bif W.	5
Andy L.	10
Warren L.	20
Kanesa T.	23
Bill D.	28
David L.	29



REMINDER

Due to our limited staff, Friends Club is not able to accommodate members who arrive before 9:30 a.m. Prior to 9:30, we are setting up the room and are not able to keep an eye on members. Please be sure to notify your caregivers or drivers.

Thank you.

Metropolitan Washington Ear

This local non-profit organization reached out to Friends Club recently to make sure our community is aware of all the free services they offer. MWE offers free news and information services for the blind, visually impaired, and the physically disabled. They strive to substitute hearing for seeing and in so doing improving the lives of people with vision impairments or physical disabilities. The following services are completely free:

- Radio broadcast using radios pre-tuned to their station and to a subcarrier channel from WETA-FM.
- Telephone dial-in news and information service accessed through a touch-tone telephone. This allows the caller to skip and scan newspapers, magazines and other information just as a sighted person would be able to do with a newspaper.
- Personal look-up service each weekday evening.
- Audio description of live stage performances in nine theaters in the Washington metropolitan area

While we recognize this is not a service that is likely to benefit people with dementia, we feel it is important to spread the word, in case someone in our broader Friends Club community could make use of it. **For more information, call 301-681-6636 or visit www.washear.org.**



Spring Entertainment Review



New Entertainer Profile:

Young at Heart Music Therapy, Tara Parks

Tara Parks has always enjoyed creating music. It started at a young age, playing music with her father. Later, she took lessons on the alto saxophone and continued honing her skills as a music therapist with singing, playing guitar, drumming and more. Tara received her bachelor of music therapy degree from Shenandoah University in Winchester, VA and completed her internship at Ruxton Health of Winchester with older adults. After passing her board certification exam, Tara accepted a job with Sunrise Senior Living, in Bethesda MD. She provided group and individual music therapy services and led a variety of structured, spontaneous and creative activities. She went on to pursue a full time music therapy position at Copper Ridge in Sykesville, MD. At Copper Ridge, Tara had the opportunity to create, develop and implement a multi-sensory music therapy program for groups, individuals and those receiving hospice care. She has been providing music and recreational services for older adults over the last 6 years and has had extensive training in Alzheimer's and Dementia care. Tara started Young at Heart Music Therapy to work closer to her home in Rockville. She is passionate about music therapy, is committed to fostering meaningful relationships and above all loves to engage in shared music experiences with older adults. Friends Club couldn't be luckier to have her share her talents with us!



Tara Parks

Nursery School Sing-a-long With Kevin and Lena James



Kevin and Lena James provided the beautiful music, and Bradley Hills Nursery School provided the harmony and dancing! Kevin and Lena have quickly become part of the Friends Club family, performing for the club once a month. In May, we were treated to a special performance with the help of a classroom from the Bradley Hills Nursery School. The song list included She'll be Coming 'Round the Mountain, This Little Light of Mine, and This Land is Your Land.



THANK YOU

...to all of our beloved Friends Club entertainers! We are lucky to have such talented, dedicated entertainers. From musicians, to historians, to art lecturers and exercise enthusiasts (yes, even when you make us do squats), Friends Club is lucky to have you!