

On Your Mind

July 2007

SARASOTA MEMORIAL
HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

A decision as important as *life* itself.™

****NEW LOCATION** SUPPORT GROUP**

**Mild Cognitive Impairment
Education & Support Group for
Families affected by MCI**

Next Meeting: July 19th

Time: 9:30am

**Topic: Costal Behavioral
Services**

**New Location: Institute
for Advanced Medicine
(Healthplex)**

5880 Rand Blvd.

**Located just ½ mile
from I-75 on the
south side of Clark
Road. Meeting will be
held on the 1st floor in
the large education
room. Signs will be
posted.**

THE MEMORY DISORDER CLINIC Medical Director

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Sponsored by Sarasota Memorial
Hospital and State of Florida Department
of Elder Affairs

WANDERING

There are many factors that may contribute to why a person with Alzheimer's or memory impairment wanders. Some of these factors include medical conditions, the consumption of alcohol, changes in the weather, or feeling abandoned, useless or helpless. Wandering may be frustrating and irritating for caregivers, but it can become very dangerous for individuals that get outside their safe environment. Below are some guidelines to follow to keep your loved one as safe as possible.

- **Be Prepared.** Be aware that wandering can occur without warning. There's no way to predict who will wander or when and how it might happen. Some people never get lost and others get lost frequently. The best advice is to be prepared.
- **Encourage movement and exercise.** Allow the person to move within safe areas or make a shared exercise such as walking part of your daily routine.
- **Be objective.** Don't take the person's wandering behavior personally. The individual is probably trying to make sense of a world that no longer seems predictable.
- **Be aware of hazards.** Remember that places that look safe might be dangerous for the person with Alzheimer's. For this reason, you should review the environment around your home for possible hazards, bodies of water, swimming pools, dense foliage, tunnels, bus stops, steep stairways, high balconies, and roadways where traffic tends to be heavy.
- **Secure your living area.** Do whatever you can to keep your home safe and secure. Place locks out of the normal line of vision--either very high or very low on doors. Use a double bolt door lock, keeping the key handy for emergencies. Use a child proof door knob that prevents the person with Alzheimer's from opening the door. Camouflage exits, fence in yards for walking or install chimes on doors to the outside.
- **Enlist the help of your neighbors.** Neighbors can keep an eye out for your loved one in case of wandering so they will know to contact you in such an instance. Keep a list of their names and telephone numbers handy when you need their help.
- **Register with Safe Return.** A national registry for individuals with memory problems.

Wandering

In the event that your loved one is not found after conducting a brief search of your own, involve the police. If a person with Alzheimer's becomes lost, take a photo and an article of unwashed, worn clothing in a plastic bag to the police. This may be needed by a search and rescue dog. Also have identifying information available such as a description, age, what clothes the person was last seen wearing and where the person was last seen. Offer suggestions about where the police might find the patient, such as old neighborhoods, former workplaces, or favorite places.

The Alzheimer's Association has a nationwide identification, enrollment program that provides assistance when a person with Alzheimer's or a related dementia wanders and becomes lost. The program is called **Safe Return**.

Individuals are enrolled locally and are provided with identification materials such as a bracelet or dog tags that should be worn at all times. Local police, fire emergency personnel are trained to recognize the identification and call the number provided to get emergency contact information. The Safe Return Program provides assistance on a 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If an enrollee is missing, one call immediately activates a community support network to help reunite the lost person with his or her caregiver.

Safe Return faxes the enrolled person's information and photo (if provided) to local law enforcement. When the person is found, a citizen or law official calls the 800-number on the identification and Safe Return notifies listed contacts. For more information about Safe Return contact the local Alzheimer Association at 365-8883

The program also provides identification to the caregiver, so that if anything happens to him/her the emergency contact is notified to check on the individual with memory trouble.

Comedy Corner

Don't let aging get you down... I have found that it is too hard to get back up.



Question & Answer

Q: My dad has been taking care of my mom for a number of years. She has Alzheimer's disease. Within the last month she has become increasingly confused. She is unable to perform tasks that she could do okay the month before. I was wondering if very hot weather can increase her confusion? Or does someone with Alzheimer's disease just all of a sudden have much more confusion particularly with activities of daily living? Recently she can't seem to remember how to get on/off the toilet or how to use her eating utensils.

A: A sudden change in the level of confusion in a person with Alzheimer's has several possible explanations. The most urgent concern is delirium. Delirium is acute confusion caused by a medical problem. Any important illness, such as stroke, heart attack, acute infection or drug side effects can cause delirium.

While cognitive losses in Alzheimer's are continuous, the onset of specific functional losses can be sudden, as the overall level of cognitive ability declines past the threshold for performance of a particular functional task. The problems you describe suggest difficulties with praxis- the organization and sequencing of motor function for a specific purpose. Problems in praxis are common in Alzheimer's disease, and represent a decline in frontal lobe brain function.

A quick trip to the doctor is in order, to exclude treatable causes of cognitive losses found in delirium. Hot weather predisposes to fluid loss that can cause problems with the amount of salt in the blood. If no acute problems are found, you may be able to work around the losses. Finger foods would allow her to continue to feed herself. More help toileting may be required. Your local Alzheimer's Association has information on the disease and what to expect.

If you have a question that you would like to have answered in the newsletter just write to:

Amy Sapanero, Editor
Memory Disorder Clinic
5880 Rand Blvd. #205
Sarasota, FL 34238

Look for your answer in an upcoming newsletter.

How to Join a Clinical Trial

“To take part in a trial is a great gift to society,” says William Thies, vice president of medical and scientific relations for the Alzheimer’s Association.

To find out about clinical trials and studies in your area, call 1-800-438-4380 for the government’s Alzheimer’s Disease Education and Referral Center, which can help you locate studies and also answer questions about them. Information is available in English and in Spanish. Listen to the prompts to choose which area meets your specific inquiry.

You may go online to www.nia.nih.gov. At this site you can navigate around to see the current trials that are open for enrollment.

The Alzheimer’s Association offers information on trails and on the disease at www.alz.org

You may also call Lorelei Lindenaux Balazs MA, LMHC at Sarasota Memorial Hospitals Memory Clinic 941-917-7197 for details of research being done in conjunction with the Byrd Institute locally here in Sarasota.

Tips for surviving another hot summer!

- **Drink plenty of fluids.** During hot weather you will need to increase the fluids you drink, regardless of your activity level.
- **Wear appropriate clothing and sunscreen.** Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- **Schedule outdoor activities carefully** and pace yourself. Try to limit your outdoor activity to morning and evening hours.
- **Stay cool indoors.** Try to stay in an air-conditioned place as much as possible.
- **Monitor those at high risk.** Visit adults at risk at least twice a day and closely watch them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Check with your doctor to see if certain medications can also increase sensitivity to the heat.
- **Adjust to the environment.** Be aware that any sudden change in temperature can affect your body. Limit your physical activity till you become used to the heat.

Community Events

**Free Lunch Seminar July 13th at 11:30am
At Arden Courts 5509 Swift Road Sarasota
Speaker: Pam Palowski, Alzheimer Association
Topic: When Is It Time For Placement
RSVP by calling 925-3900 Free Daycare during seminar- please request tour service when making reservation.**



Free Memory Screenings

The Memory Disorder Clinic offers **free memory screenings** at The Senior Friendship Centers on the 2nd Monday of every month in Sarasota and on the 1st Wednesday of every month in Venice. Call (941) 917-7197 to schedule an appointment.

Memory Clinic and Support Group NEW Location

Our office has moved to the **Institute for Advanced Medicine at 5880 Rand Blvd, Suite 205 in Sarasota.** Exit 205 off of I - 75. Many of you may have heard about the new Healthplex building which houses the Institute for Advanced Medicine, the Memory Clinic, Radiology, Laboratory, Cardiac Rehabilitation and other SMH departments. Memory Disorder Clinic patients can now choose to have much of their testing completed at this same location. The building has plenty of parking. It is hoped that this will make visiting the Memory Disorder Clinic easier for all of our patients and families.

**Sarasota Memorial Hospital
Memory Disorder Clinic
Institute for Advanced Medicine
5880 Rand Blvd., # 205
Sarasota, FL 34238
(941) 917-7197**

Located just 1/2 mile from I-75 on the south side of Clark Road.

www.sarasotageriatrics.com