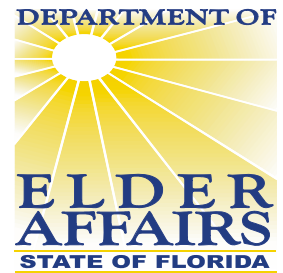




Sarasota Memorial Hospital  
 Memory Disorder Clinic  
On Your Mind  
 MAY 2009



**MCI Education & Support Groups**

For families affected by Mild Cognitive Impairment

**SARASOTA**

Next Meeting: **MAY 21<sup>ST</sup>**

Time: **9:30am**

Speaker: Tanice Knopp, Exec. Director, ITN Sarasota

Topic: Dignified Transportation for Seniors

Location: Senior Friendship Center- 1900 Brother Geenen Way, Sarasota

**VENICE**

**Don't forget the MAY Meeting: MAY 5<sup>th</sup> 9:30am**

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 JUNE Meeting: **JUNE 2<sup>ND</sup>**

Time: **9:30am**

Speaker: Gina Townsend-Ackerson of Comprehensive Home Care

Topic: Low Vision Seniors  
 Location: Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church – 1301 Center Road, Venice

**SMH MEMORY DISORDER CLINIC**

**941/917-7197**

**Medical Director**

**Bruce Robinson MD MPH**

**Program Manager**

**Kathleen Houseweart MBA**

**Editor: Amy Sapanero**

**VISUAL SPATIAL IMPAIRMENT AND DRIVING**

In approximately ten percent of people with dementia, there are problems with visual spatial perception occurring early on in the disease. This can occur even before the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease is made. These problems are caused by changes in the brain and generally not by an eye condition. However, it is always a good idea to be sure the problem is not related to a treatable eye condition, and have a thorough eye exam. It is also important that individuals and their family understand how visual spatial problems can affect safety.

Visual spatial impairment can be described as having problems with judging space between objects and depth perception. It can also affect the brain's ability to recognize objects. It can lead to misplacing objects and then finding them in a place that has already been searched. A person with visual spatial impairment may complain of not being able to see as well, having problems with reading, or may overreach for objects. They may have problems adjusting the thermostat. They may not be able to see things in motion.

Visual spatial problems can make driving a safety risk. It is not uncommon for individuals with cognitive impairments to have no insight into driving risks. Once it is confirmed that there is difficulty with depth perception or acuity for moving objects, driving should be discontinued. A driving evaluation by a certified Occupational Therapist can provide excellent advice for both driver and family about driving safety. Though not covered by Medicare, a driving evaluation can provide reassurance for safe drivers and avoid negative consequences by identifying driving problems before they lead to accidents.

It is best to start discussions regarding driving early – even before problems arise. Have a plan. Discussing the situation openly in a trusting environment can help the person with Alzheimer's accept the decision to stop driving more easily. If you have questions regarding driving safety, contact the SMH Drivers' Education Program at 917-2183.

## Independent Transportation Network

ITN Sarasota is a new program in our area that offers safe rides for seniors in automobiles, 24 hours/7 days a week. Volunteers help older people stay connected to families, friends, and activities that bring meaning to their lives and to yours. All of us have a stake in helping ensure that older adults and the visually impaired can remain active once they stop driving.

If you love to drive and have some spare time on your hands, think about how rewarding your help and companionship would be to a senior who can no longer get behind the wheel. Or if you know older drivers or non-drivers who could benefit from our services, please contact ITN at 941-364-7530 or email [info@ITNSarasota.org](mailto:info@ITNSarasota.org) to learn more.

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## New Report Findings

**Orlando, Florida, April 4th, 2009** – A new report by the Florida Office on Disability and Health finds that in 2008, 1.8 million Floridians age 18 and older provided care for a family member or friend. Of those caregivers, a stunning 47 percent (828,000 people) said that they provided care for a person with memory problems, Alzheimer's disease, or other dementias.

Just two weeks ago, the Alzheimer's Association released a national report showing that 573,000 Floridians were providing care for someone with memory problems, Alzheimer's disease, or other dementias. This figure was based on national estimates projected to states. Thanks to the leadership of the Florida Department of Health, questions about caregiving were added to a survey conducted in the state in 2008, and we now know that the true number for Florida is much higher than national estimates suggest.

## New Memory Disorder Program Gives in-home Help to Caregivers

Sarasota Memorial's Memory Disorder Clinic has recently partnered with that Area Agency on Aging, the Senior Friendship Center, Alzheimer's Association, USF and Jewish Family & Children Services to create the "*Informed Choices*" project. The program offers free in-home assessments to families providing care to an older adult in the community. The assessment will include assistance with setting up a plan of care, referral to local resources and caregiver education.

The goal of the grant is to help caregivers get connected to the resources already available in Sarasota, reduce caregiver stress and allow older adults with memory problems to be cared for at home when possible. Kathleen Houseweart from the Memory Disorder Clinic notes "Many families just need information. They are willing to provide care, but just don't know how or where to find basic supports."

During the home visit, staff will also be able to offer basic caregiver training and offer tips on behavioral management in caring for someone with memory loss. The new program is free and open to anyone over age 18 providing care to individuals older than 60 who live in Sarasota County. It is hoped that by supporting caregivers, we can assist individuals with memory problems age in place. If you or someone you know could benefit from the **Informed Choices Program**, please call 917-7197.

## WORD PUZZLES



(Answers on page 3)

# Lewy Body Dementia

The early stage symptoms of Lewy Body dementia are quite different from Alzheimer's disease. A clinical feature of Lewy Body dementia is a progressive, often rapid decline in brain function. Early in the disease, short-term memory may not be affected. Problems with paying attention, organizing and visual spatial skills may be noticed first.

A person with Lewy Body dementia may have considerable fluctuation in their alertness and attention within a short period of time. Between 50 and 80 percent of all people with Lewy Body dementia have vivid visual or auditory hallucinations early in the disease. Lewy Body patients often report seeing little people or children sitting on their couch or small animals running around the home. They may become very upset or agitated if family members argue with them about the reality of their visions. Caregivers may find it helpful to understand that arguing or trying to convince the person that these visions are not real – will only make them agitated. Patients with Lewy Body can also be very sensitive to the medications used to treat hallucinations.

Lewy Body dementia patients share similar brain pathology with people who have Parkinson's disease. They also may experience physical symptoms of Parkinsonism, including mild tremors, muscle stiffness and movement problems. Some people tend to shuffle when they walk. They are more at risk for falls and may experience brief loss of consciousness.

Understanding the symptoms of this progressive disease can make life less difficult for the entire family.

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## Fast Fact:

An estimated 26 million people have Alzheimer's globally and experts predict this number will grow to 106 million by 2050.

# NEW! Weekly Evening Support Group

The Caregiver Resource Center & the Informed Choices Caregiver Support Project now offer an evening weekly support group for caregivers.

**Tuesdays, 6-7pm at Sarasota Senior Friendship Center -Caregiver Resource Center** Facilitated by Paula Falk, Director of Senior Friendship Center and Jane Johnson, MSW. **Call 556-3268 for further information.**

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## FREE Memory Screenings

1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month, 1-3 pm Senior Friendship Center, 2350 Scenic Drive, **Venice**

2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month, 2-4 pm Senior Friendship Center, Caregiver Resource Center 1820 Brother Geenen Way, **Sarasota**

**For appointments call 941/917-7197**

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**Sarasota Memorial Hospital  
Memory Disorder Clinic  
Institute for Advanced Medicine  
5880 Rand Blvd., # 211  
Sarasota, FL 34238  
(941) 917-7197**

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

**[www.sarasotageriatrics.com](http://www.sarasotageriatrics.com)**

**THE MEMORY DISORDER CLINIC  
(941) 917-7197**

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## WORD PUZZLE ANSWERS:

**Point Blank Range  
History Repeats Itself**