



huperzine



In 1986, Tom Warren, author of *Beating Alzheimer's*, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease (AD) by his doctor. Shocked, he asked for X-rays to confirm the diagnosis since other conditions can mimic the disease, but there was no doubt as to his condition. The X-rays showed definite deterioration of his brain. Stunned, he and his wife began a search for information and a treatment.

Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is currently thought to affect 5 to 10% of the population over the age of 65 and up to 20% of those over 80. The deterioration of memory and other crucial mental processes make Alzheimer's such a feared and devastating disease.

Alzheimer's Disease is characterized by a progressive loss of an enzyme, choline acetyltransferase (CAT), responsible for the synthesis of acetylcholine, an important neurotransmitter in the brain. Although the brain appears normal in early stages, characteristic plaques (amyloid deposits), neurofibrillary tangles, and granulovacuolar degeneration begin to appear and result as the disease becomes more advanced.

Symptoms & Causes

Dementia is the most common and severe symptom of AD and accounts for 75% of all cases of senile dementia that occur in Canada. It produces cognitive and coordinative dysfunctions with a noticeable loss of memory. Many factors are thought to be influential in the onset of AD. Heavy metal poisoning, decreased blood circulation in the brain, nutritional and biological disturbances, as well as reactions from an accumulation of environmental neurotoxins have all been proposed as possible culprits. There appears to be a genetic component, since the frequency of the disease is higher in an identical twin, or a child of a person with AD. It also occurs at higher levels in persons with Down's Syndrome. There has been no infectious agent identified that might cause the disease and there is no current evidence suggesting that an infection is involved. It is possible, though not proven, that chemical pollutants, high fat diet, and sedentary lifestyle may lead to the severe form of the disease.

Tom Warren was able to trace his syndrome to a combination of factors. He discovered that mercury toxicity from his dental work scored

highest on his list of causative agents. This has been confirmed by recent research conducted by Dr. Murray Vimy, University of Calgary, who reported, "In a human autopsy study, brain tissues from people with AD at death were compared with an age-matched group of controls without AD. The only significant difference in metal content between the two groups was mercury which was considerably higher in the AD group. Mercury concentration was prominent in the hippocampus, amygdala, and nucleus basalis, all structures involved in memory function."

Warren also found that the mercury and cavitations have compromised his immune system which led him to investigate food, chemical and airborne allergies. Previous drug reactions, chemical pollutants in his environment and finding new ways to handle his emotional stress also became very significant, as well as learning about his own metabolism and how to eat, sleep, and balance his daily activities with exercise.

Treatment

In Europe, one of the main therapies for AD is Ginkgo Biloba leaf, which is a widely-used plant extract sold by prescription. This flavonoid-rich extract promotes blood circulation to the brain and to other parts of the body. It primarily benefits persons suffering from poor circulation in their brain due to arteriosclerosis. However, the same, or similar effects may be attained by using other herbs that are also a source of circulation-promoting flavonoids.

New Hope for Alzheimer's

Huperzine is a new plant-based medicine which is an anticholinesterase alkaloid made up of two chemical components, huperzine-A and huperzine-B, which have similar effects, but differing activity levels. Huperzines-A and -B reversibly inhibit cholinesterase with demonstrating memory enhancement and positive results when used for AD and senile dementia. In a double-blind trial with a group of 56 patients suffering from senile dementia and a group of 104 patients with senile and presenile memory loss, huperzine-A was found to be effective for improving memory.

Antioxidants like super oxide dismutase (SOD), glutathione, and Pycnogenol, found in grape seeds or pine bark extract, are very helpful for conditions like AD because they can cross the

blood brain barrier and enter the brain where many heavy metals and toxic chemicals do their damage. Recently, phosphatidyl serine, an important component of brain cell membranes, has become available as a supplement. Phosphatidyl serine improves memory loss, one of the key symptoms in AD. It appears to also improve mood, sociability, and cognitive abilities. Important to the activity of phosphatidyl serine is a regular intake of essential fatty acids (ESF's) from cold-pressed oils stored in light-protected containers. Protein is also essential to the nervous system. Sources like nuts, seeds, and legumes supply the much needed amino acids. For those that eat fish, it, too, is a good "brain food".

To prevent conditions like Alzheimer's Disease and age-related declines in brain function, it is very important to continually challenge your neural networks with exercise, mental stimulation, and memory challenges. Exposure to chemical and metallic toxins must be minimized, especially artificial sweeteners like aspartame, a potent brain toxin responsible for memory loss. A diet based on natural foods with supplementation of the nutrients which feed nerves and brain cells is essential.

Taking control of your life in a healthy manner to reduce emotional and mental stress is also important for maintaining a healthy nervous system. Meditation, Tai-Chi, yoga, and other practices are exceptionally useful in this regard. The old axiom "what we don't use, we lose" certainly applies to our nervous system, as well as to our memory and mental capacity.

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