

EASTERN CAPE NEWSLETTER

MEMORIES *matter* - JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2025

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| ISSUE #02



A Message from our Regional Manager

Dear Reader

Hello and welcome to our spring edition of our newsletter. On Sunday, 21 September we celebrated World Alzheimer's Day. The theme for 2025 is: [#AskAboutAlzheimers](#) and [#AskAboutDementia](#).

This year's theme is very close to my heart and something that can very easily get me onto a soap box. Having worked in the field of practice as a social worker since 2006, I am reminded on a daily basis, how very little we as a community know about this disease.

Therefore in addressing this theme ADI wants us to help change people's perceptions and normalise asking questions and hearing more..

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...about this condition at currently impacts the lives of 55 million people.

Until we have a better understanding of the disease it is not going to get the general recognition in society that it deserves.

As a community we need a clear understanding of what is “Dementia” and what is “Alzheimer’s” disease.

To break it down – **Dementia**, referring to a disease of the brain is the umbrella term. **Alzheimer’s** disease is a form of dementia.

In essence, a person living with dementia becomes increasingly dependent on others as they increasingly lose their ability to do tasks and activities they did competently before.

In order to create an understanding of the disease, although not comprehensive here is a list of some of the signs and symptoms.

- *Loses the ability to do activities of daily living.*
- *Repeating themselves.*
- *Difficulty in finding words to express themselves.*
- *Decreasing ability to do daily tasks.*



These signs and symptoms often go hand in hand with frustration, disinhibition and inappropriate expression of emotions.

We urge anyone who is concerned about experiencing such symptoms to get it/them checked out soonest.

Always remember an invaluable resource for the person living with dementia and their family is their church community, who are considered, familiar, accepting and a supportive part of their lives.

We are always extremely grateful to our donors; their generosity of spirit enables us to continue proving much needed services and care to folks living with Dementia. Thank you to the Rosser Trust for their invaluable support.

Should you have any queries or questions or wish to benefit from our services please feel free to contact me by email heather.rauch@adasa.org.za

Regional Update

The intention of this update is to assist all of us in understanding and gaining insight into “What is Dementia” **and** “What is Alzheimer’s Disease”?

What is Dementia?

Dementia is a term for several brain diseases that affect memory, thinking and the ability to perform daily activities. Dementia is chronic and progressive and it causes irreversible damage to brain cells. Currently, there is no cure for dementia. An important point to remember is that Dementia is NOT part of normal aging. Dementia usually affects older people (over 65). It is less common for Dementia to develop in younger people. According to the World Alzheimer’s report of 2021 there are 55 million people living with dementia and this will rise to 139 million in 2050.

There are over 100 forms of dementia – the most well-known being Alzheimer’s Disease.

For a moment let’s examine the

difference between normal aging and dementia.

As people get **older**, they get a little bit more forgetful. With age, most people need a bit longer to remember things; they are easily distracted and struggle to multi-task as well as they did before. Our brains change with age and some people might start experiencing these from middle age – during their 40s, 50s and early 60s onwards.

With **dementia**, however, changes will be different, more serious and will have greater impact on everyday life and functioning. Dementia is the umbrella term for loss of memory and other thinking abilities severe enough to interfere with daily life. An important point to be mindful of is that **dementia can only be diagnosed by a qualified and experienced medical professional!**



The word ‘**dementia**’ describes a group of symptoms that may affect

- **Cognitive** abilities for instance memory loss, difficulties with thinking and planning.
- **Functional** abilities (difficulty with activities of daily living – ADLS)
- **Psycho-social functions** (disturbed/altered ways of thinking, delusions, hallucinations, paranoia)
- **Behaviour** (changes in mood, how they relate with people, perceptions, personality /behavioural changes.
- **Physical** abilities (mobility, continence, chewing, swallowing)
- **Sensory awareness** (changes in sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste).

Early Signs of Dementia to be aware of are:

- Declining short-term memory
- Forgetting how to do previously familiar tasks like preparing a meal or making a cup of coffee.
- Problems with language in that they have a problem joining a conversation or even joining a conversation.
- Disorientation to time and place – getting lost in familiar places.
- Poor judgement in dressing inappropriately like wearing several layers of clothing on a warm day or few on a cold day.
- Problems in keeping track of things or finding it difficult to make decisions or even solve problems.
- Misplacing things in unusual places/hide things/accuse others of stealing.
- Unusually rapid mood swings, being irritable and or even withdrawn.
- Misinterpret their environment, cannot judge height, depth and have problems driving
- Withdraw from social activities by losing interest or a passive and sometimes prefer to sleep a lot.



1. Alzheimer's

Alzheimer's is the **most known** type of dementia. It is characterised by the Amyloid plaques and beta-tangles that form inside and in between brain cells. It is an illness that gets worse over time and damages brain cells.

The symptoms include:

- Memory impairment, difficulty in recalling recent events and conversations, forgetting the names of close family members and friends.
- Struggling to find the right word during conversation leading to frequent pauses and as the same question over and over.
- Having trouble in doing familiar tasks like working the remote, turning on the microwave, cooking a meal or even struggling to follow directions/instructions or steps to complete a task.
- Losing track of places, dates, seasons or time and at times appear to be disorientated.

2. Vascular Dementia

Is generally caused by blood circulation to the brain, sometimes it is caused by a single stroke or even several strokes occurring over time.

3. Frontotemporal Dementia

Generally caused by one or both of the frontal lobes of the brain

- Frontal involves behavioural symptoms and personality changes
- Temporal involves language impairments.

Have problems with socially acceptable behaviour in that they may be rude, show lack of inhibition or act impulsively.

4. Lewy Body Dementia

Is generally caused by the death of nerve cells in the brain, this dementia sometimes happens along with Alzheimer's and/or vascular dementia and/or Parkinson's.

5. Parkinson's

Parkinson's is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that happens with the cells/neurons that controls movement is damaged and/or dies.

6. Mixed Dementia

Mixed Dementia some people have more than one type of dementia and the most common combination is Alzheimer's disease and Vascular dementia.

7. Korsakoff

Korsakoff – the abuse of alcohol over many years can cause brain damage that produces signs of dementia.

8. HIV/Aids Dementia

1.HIV/Aids Dementia – folks living with HIV/Aids may develop HIV associated dementia resulting in severe cognitive, motor and behavioural problems.

Each type of dementia presents special early symptoms because different parts of the brain are affected first. As dementia progresses and more areas of the brain are damaged, the symptoms of the different types of dementia seem to be similar. The progress of the other dementias can in the end be compared with that of Alzheimer's disease.

It is important to note that Dementia is not often recognised as a serious health condition in South Africa and largely understood as a 'normal part of aging' by communities, health care practitioners and social care agencies.

There are also medical conditions that look like dementia; however the key difference is that the symptoms appear suddenly, whereas dementia develops slowly over time. Low levels of vitamins, and hormones, depression, bladder and other infections or even brain tumours can look like dementia. **Coming to terms with a dementia diagnosis is life changing, accompanied by a host of feelings, like sadness, fear and anger. Every person will react differently.**

Eastern Cape Upcoming Diary

#AskAboutDementia #AskAboutAlzheimers

Please join our very informative Facebook page for regional updates and other important and relevant information.

Alzheimer's South Africa (Adasa)

Please consider donating to ADASA Eastern Cape. Your donation, no matter the size, helps us to slow the progression of dementia as well as to offer vital support to families facing this challenge and to train more caregivers to meet the ever-growing need.

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Your donation is SARS tax-deductible, and we give you recognition through issuing of a Section 18A certificate.



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from the Eastern Cape

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