The East Central Florida Memory Disorder Clinic

The East Central Florida Memory Disorder Clinic is one of 15 state designated memory disorder clinics funded in part, through the Florida Department of Elder Affairs. For the last 20 years, the Memory Clinic has provided education classes, presentations, support groups, memory screens, and medical evaluations to thousands of people each year.

Our educational classes include a variety of topics geared toward family caregivers, people diagnosed with early Alzheimer’s disease or related disorders, people with mild cognitive impairment, the general public, and professionals.

We also offer classes to cognitively well seniors who are looking to enhance their memory fitness.

For information on any of our classes, please contact Lynne Brownrigg by phone at (321) 434-7614, or by email at Lynne.Brownrigg@healthfirst.org

Communication & Dementia

Communication of our needs, wishes and feelings, is not only important to maintain quality of life, but also to preserve our sense of identity. Many tend to think of communication as talking, but it consists of much more than that. A large proportion of our communication is non-verbal, which takes place through gestures, facial expressions and touch. Non-verbal communication is particularly important when a person is losing their language skills.

Difficulties with language occur in all forms of dementia and in some forms of Mild Cognitive Impairment. An early sign that someone is having trouble with language is that they can't find the right words – particularly the names of people and things. The person may substitute an incorrect word, or may not find any word at all. This may be distressing, but it's a normal aspect of their memory loss.

There are ways to make things a little easier. Make sure you have the person's full attention. Minimize competing noises, such as the radio, TV, or other people's conversations.

Speak clearly and calmly. Use short, simple sentences. If you have to, ask questions one at a time, and phrase them in a way that allows for a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Make sure that the person can see you clearly. If appropriate, make sure the person's glasses are the correct prescription, that their hearing has been checked, and that their dentures fit well and are comfortable.

Listen carefully to what the person is saying, and give them plenty of encouragement. If the person has difficulty finding the right word or finishing a sentence, ask them to explain it in a different way. Listen out for clues. Also pay attention to their body language. Use physical contact to communicate your reassurance. Do not shout or over-exaggerate words as this will distort your speech. Use visual clues – write your message down if the person is able to read or use objects or pictures to help the person understand. Offer a guess, but be careful not to cause unnecessary frustration.

Overall, be patient and supportive. Let the person know you're listening and trying to understand. Show the person that you care about what he or she is saying and be careful not to interrupt. Try to keep the mood light and laugh together when you can.
Diagnosing Memory Disorders

The first step in getting help for a memory problem is to have a thorough medical evaluation. Treatable conditions that cause memory trouble can be found during such evaluations, and, if such a condition is identified, treatment can begin immediately. These conditions include depression, side effects of certain prescription drugs, vitamin deficiencies or thyroid problems, etc.

The evaluation of the memory problem will focus on three questions. First, is the memory trouble more than what we expect for normal aging? To answer this question, the evaluation will evaluate brain power in a number of areas. Sometimes in early memory loss, changes are difficult to detect—though they may seem apparent to family or caregivers. In these cases more extensive testing is needed. Neuropsychologists use tests designed to identify changes in specific areas of thinking.

Second, what is the cause of the memory problem? More than 30 different diseases can cause serious memory loss. However, only a few of them account for more than 90% of all memory symptoms. Blood work can often easily rule out some of the treatable causes of memory symptoms. Brain imaging (CT scan, MRI or PET) may be used to rule out rare conditions that can affect memory. Unfortunately neither the blood work, nor the brain imaging can clearly identify diseases like Alzheimer’s. These tests only offer pieces to the puzzle in finding the answer of what the cause might be.

Finally, can the memory problem be improved? The doctor may recommend treatment of a specific disease or recommend changes in lifestyle or medication to reduce symptoms. Prescription drugs available for dementia have only offered limited success. Often times the best recommendations are ones regarding community resources, care needs and safety.

Independence & Dementia

It’s important to support and encourage anyone with dementia to do as much as they can for themselves by only offering only as much help as they need. This is not always easy. It can be frustrating watching someone struggle, especially if you could do it quicker and easier. But even if a person is struggling with a task, try to avoid the temptation to take over. If you do, they may lose confidence and withdraw from engaging in activities. Try to do things with, rather than for, them. This will help them feel more involved and show that you are not taking over, or questioning their abilities. Focus on what the person can do, rather than what they can't.

Be aware that many individuals with dementia or mild cognitive impairment have difficulty following complicated or multi-step instructions. Try breaking the task into smaller steps, and allow plenty of time for things to get done. For example, a loved one may find it easier to continue dressing themselves if you put the clothes out in the order that they need to put them on. Or you could pass the garments to them one at a time. Adjust activities as necessary based on a person's interests and abilities.

Even if the person can't complete a full task, carrying out one or two steps, especially the final step, can give them a sense of achievement. It is the sense of belonging and involvement that is important, not necessarily the activity or how well it is completed. Offer praise, reassurance and encouragement.

Try doing things together, such as going for a walk, folding clothes or drying dishes. Make doing things together a part of your daily routine. It is important that everyone have a role in the family. Trying to do it all is not good for the caregiver or the person they are caring for. Finally and most importantly - keep your sense of humor and remember – nobody is perfect.
Memory Disorder Clinic Educational Classes for January 2015

**EASE Alumni:** If you’ve attended the EASE series, please come to the monthly EASE Alumni group meeting offered in Melbourne, on **Wednesday, January 7**th, from **2:00p.m. -3:30p.m.**, at the Health First Center for Family Caregivers. Facilitated by Farah Sivolella and Sharon Ramsey.

**Next Steps after Diagnosis:** A family member has recently been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia and now you are wondering what it means and what do you need to do next? Please plan on attending this informative class and gain a greater understanding of what to expect and what you need to do next. **Presented by Farah Sivolella, on Friday, January 9**th from **10:30am to 11:30am**, prior to the monthly support group at the Osceola Council on Aging.

**First Steps:** The East Central Florida Memory Disorder Clinic and the Alzheimer’s Association will offer the **First Steps interactive five-part education program** based on the Alzheimer’s Association’s Living with Alzheimer’s series. This program is specifically designed for people who are **newly diagnosed and in the early stages of dementia and their caregivers.** Geared to help you take action to navigate this chapter in your life, this program will be offered at the Health First Center for Family Caregivers starting on **Monday, January 12**th and will cover topics such as: understanding the diagnosis, and learning how to partner with your medical team; communication and coping strategies; legal and financial concerns; safety issues and community resources. **RSVP at 1-800-272-3900**

**Virtual Dementia Tour:** A free tour offering a hands-on experience created for anyone seeking to understand the physical and mental challenges of those with Alzheimer's and other related dementias. **Wednesday, January 14**th, from 3:00pm to 4:30pm at Brevard Alzheimer’s Foundation - Joe’s Club on Wickham Rd. in Melbourne. You must call to reserve a space. Please call Monday thru Friday, **9:00 am to 5:00 pm** at: **(321) 253-4430.**

**Total Memory Workout:** For the Cognitively Well Senior: Please join Certified Total Memory Workout Trainer Farah Sivolella of the East Central Florida Memory Disorder Clinic and learn more about your memory and practice “memorcises” designed to build memory muscle. **The 6 week class series will be offered starting Wed, January 28**th and on 6 consecutive Wednesdays through March 4th. Please plan to attend all six classes. For more information or to RSVP, please call Lynne Brownrigg at **434-7614.**

**Stress-Busting Alumni:** The next Alumni meeting will be at **10 a.m. at the Memory Clinic conference room on Friday, February 6**th.
**Memory Disorder Clinic Support Groups**

**Empowered Caregivers Support Group** – Meets every Thursday at 11am at the Center for Family Caregivers and allows caregivers who care for someone with memory loss to share their journey with those who understand what they’re going through. **This group includes group discussions and education and is facilitated by Nick Wilson, MSW, with Health-First Aging Services.**

**Dementia Caregiver Support Group**: Meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month, January 7th and January 21st, at 10:30am, at the Sunflower House in Merritt Island at the Merritt Square Mall. Facilitated by Sharon Ramsey of the Memory Disorder Clinic. Respite is not available.

**Osceola Family Caregiver Support Group** – Meets on the second Friday of each month at 12:00 Noon, at the Osceola Council on Aging, in Kissimmee, FL. This month’s meeting is on Friday, January 9th. For more information, please call Lynne at (321) 434-7614.

**Addresses and Phone Numbers**

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<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory Disorder Clinic</td>
<td>3661 S. Babcock St. (2nd Floor), Melbourne</td>
<td>(321) 434-7612</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center for Family Caregivers</td>
<td>3661 S. Babcock St., Melbourne</td>
<td>(321) 434-7625</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brevard Alz Foundation</td>
<td>4676 N. Wickham Rd., Melbourne</td>
<td>(321) 253-4430</td>
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<td>Osceola Council on Aging</td>
<td>700 Generation Point, Kissimmee</td>
<td>(407) 846-8532</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunflower House</td>
<td>777 E. Merritt Island Causeway, Merritt Island</td>
<td>(321) 452-4341</td>
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**Brain Wellness and Health!** Start the New Year off by taking care of you and your brain – call the Memory Clinic to schedule a free memory screen!

Memory Screens are a good first step if you have concerns about your memory or if you just want to develop a memory baseline. Memory screens will not provide a diagnosis but can determine next steps and when you should talk with your doctor. The memory screens are confidential and administered by trained professionals. **Please call the Memory Clinic at (321) 434-7612, and then press 1 to schedule the 30 minute memory screen appointment.**

**BRAIN TEASER** –

In one minute, write down as many words that you can think of that begin with the letter “B”. Try doing this every day with a different letter!

To receive or discontinue this newsletter, please contact Lynne Brownrigg at (321) 434-7614, or email her at lynne.brownrigg@health-first.org