



## The Menen Centre For Optimum Health Oakville and Toronto

### Brain and Mental Health

Just prior to holiday season the two of us attended conferences regarding the brain and mental health. One conference focused on Depression, Delirium and Dementia including current research on Alzheimer's Disease. The other conference focused slightly more on the effects of brain injury due to stroke and other vascular conditions such as aneurysms. Though both provided an immense amount of information, we wanted to share a few key points for your general awareness.

Take home points regarding Depression, Delirium and Dementia included:

- Risk reduction emphasized the lowering of cholesterol and the control of diabetes and hyperthyroidism if present
- Regular exercise and engagement of social activities also play a vital role in risk reduction
- If Alzheimer's Disease is diagnosed, assisted living or special care facilities should be evaluated as to if they can provide daily activities that can be enjoyed and that the patient is comfortable with performing (activities, new or old, should not be presented to the patient in a way that could possibly confuse the patient or potentially lead to the patient being unable to complete or solve a task)
- Warning signs of Alzheimer's Disease include memory loss affecting day to day function, difficulty performing familiar tasks, problems with language, disorientation of time and place, poor or reduced judgment, problems with abstract thinking, misplacing things, mood/behaviour changes, personality changes and loss of initiative
- A recent study found that Alzheimer's is prevalent in nearly 50% of people aged 85 or older

Take home points regarding brain injury included:

- Early detection and speed of response is vital to ensure proper recovery from brain injury due to stroke
- If any symptoms of stroke occur and then go away, individuals should still be evaluated as it most likely indicates that a Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) or 'mini stroke' has occurred. Immediate evaluation is essential as up to 20% of people will experience a full stroke within 90 days (usually within the first 48 hours)
- Intervention within first 3 hours are the most critical (32,000 nerve cells are lost each second if left untreated)

From a naturopathic perspective the old adage 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure' really comes into play. Ensuring healthy cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure levels and proper thyroid function can help to protect brain health, whether by preventing the development of Alzheimer's disease or related dementia, or by minimizing the potential of developing a stroke. Traditional Chinese Medicine has long connected brain health with heart health. Strengthening mental function, brain health and cardio vascular health through dietary modifications, from both a western and/or Traditional Chinese perspective, can not only help with the prevention of mental illness, but can also help prevent the development of a cardiovascular incident leading to stroke. Naturopathic medicine can also be used to help those who have suffered from a stroke, whether by supporting the recovery process, or by preventing the development of subsequent strokes.

--Dr. Hanifa Menen, BSc, ND and Dr. Jeff Appelman, BSc, ND

#### Stroke Warning Signs as outlined by the Heart and Stroke Foundation

**Weakness** – sudden loss of strength or sudden numbness in the face, arm or leg, even if temporary

**Trouble Speaking** – sudden difficulty speaking or understanding or sudden confusion, even if temporary

**Vision Problems** – sudden trouble with vision, even if temporary

**Headache** – sudden severe and unusual headaches

**Dizziness** – sudden loss of balance, especially with any of the above signs

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