

The Importance of Memory Loss Awareness

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Abstract

Memory loss, whether mild or severe, poses a significant challenge in a rapidly aging world population, increasing the urgency for effective strategies and public awareness for cognitive health. Dementia, including Alzheimer's disease (AD), affects millions of people worldwide, impairing daily functioning and causing a significant economic and social burden. It is recognized as a major cause of disability in the aging population, with significant personal, social and economic consequences. This paper discusses the current state of memory loss. It emphasizes the need to reduce the social stigma associated with a dementia diagnosis and the importance of early detection and lifestyle intervention. This paper examines how the broad reach and interactivity of social media, digital platforms, and targeted education campaigns can increase public understanding and facilitate early intervention. By promoting awareness and understanding through these means, this paper advocates for a more informed and supportive public environment that allows for early intervention and better management of forgetfulness. Ultimately, the aim is to improve quality of life and reduce the overall impact of dementia on society.

Keywords: Memory loss, Dementia, Alzheimer's disease (AD), cognitive health, public awareness, societal stigma, early detection, lifestyle interventions, digital platforms, social media, educational campaigns, quality of life, economic impact

In today's world, forgetting something as simple as where you left your keys can cause a moment of panic. This concern is not unfounded in today's society, given the increased need for awareness surrounding the topic of memory loss, especially for individuals who are at higher risk of developing Dementia, including Alzheimer's Disease (AD). Dementia broadly describes the loss of memory, language, problem-solving and other thinking abilities (Alzheimer's Association, 2024), alongside AD being a devastating neurodegenerative disorder that causes the brain to shrink and brain cells to die. This problem is widespread, affecting people's ability to develop and stick to consistent routines, dramatically impacting their daily functioning and quality of life. It affects millions of people globally and is a growing healthcare challenge that currently has no cure (Guerdoux et al., 2012). It is the seventh leading cause of death and one of the significant causes of disability and dependency among older people globally (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023).

Dementia affects not only individuals who struggle with it but their family, friends, and caretakers as well. The pressing goal is to develop effective strategies that assist these individuals in establishing and adhering to healthy habits, thereby enhancing their ability to manage their condition and maintain a level of consistency in their daily lives. One main issue involving individuals who struggle with Dementia, the worst case scenario being AD, is the fact that they did not take earlier actions when they had the chance, often because they were not equipped with the knowledge or due to stigmatization of the topic (WHO, 2023). Approaching this topic, it is vital to ask the question, how can we bring forward more awareness about memory loss and treatment to help improve cognitive health? Given the irreversible effects of memory loss, it is critical to elevate the public's understanding of the importance of cognitive health and preventive memory loss measures. Through modest lifestyle changes, memory loss can be significantly counteracted, improving well-being overall. By harnessing the broad reach

and interactive capabilities of social media, dedicated digital platforms, and targeted educational campaigns, significant strides can be made toward enhancing public awareness and encouraging early intervention for cognitive health.

Dementia is a global epidemic that negatively impacts society through several different factors. For instance, the global economic costs of Dementia were estimated to reach \$1313.4 billion USD in 2019 (Wimo et al., 2023). This rising cognitive health concern burdens medical and social care systems as there will be an increased strain on these services, which will have significant societal and economic implications (GBD 2019 Dementia Forecasting Collaborators, 2022), highlighting the prevalence of the damaging impact memory loss will have financially for individuals, their families, and society. It is estimated that approximately 75% of people with Dementia, specially people diagnosed with AD, will be living in a nursing home by the age of 80 (Skaria, 2022), showcasing the increasing need for long-term assisted living services in the future. The incidence of Dementia is increasing at a rate where it is challenging for healthcare institutions to be able to accommodate and provide necessary care for the growing number of affected individuals. Beyond its societal implications, memory loss and Dementia also profoundly affect the individuals directly experiencing these conditions.

Memory loss is a severe healthcare challenge that is influenced by various factors, including environmental factors, lifestyle choices, stress, sleep deprivation, age-related changes and more (Govindugari et al., 2023). While this is a broad range of risk factors, it is still essential to highlight the importance of early detection and treatment. The issue at hand involves individuals, particularly in the early stages of Dementia, who face significant challenges in forming and maintaining healthy, repetitive habits due to memory loss. There is also such a thing as average memory loss, which is prevalent in aging. Memory loss is something that many individuals will experience in their 70s and 80s, and it is something that people even start to

notice as early as their 50s (Petersen, 2023). Although it is not as drastic as AD, it can still be inconvenient to deal with when it comes to daily life and productivity. Preventative measures and medical advice should be sought out regardless of memory loss being something that is common, as it can also be a symptom of Dementia or another underlying health issue.

According to the WHO (2023), currently, more than 55 million people worldwide suffer from some form of Dementia, and every year there are nearly 10 million new cases. It is estimated that this number will almost double every 20 years, reaching 78 million in 2030 and 139 million in 2050 (Spokane County Library District, 2023). Just this fact alone highlights why it is absolutely essential to create more awareness and understanding regarding the topic of memory loss and Dementia in order to fight against societal stigmatization and to remove barriers when it comes to detection and care.

Symptoms of Dementia can include forgetfulness, confusion, losing track of time, difficulties with problem-solving, making decisions, performing familiar tasks, and many more. It can also cause changes to an individual's mood, causing them to become emotionally distraught, personality and behaviour changes, and withdrawal. Dementia is something that can affect people in various ways depending on the underlying causes, other health conditions and the person's cognitive function (WHO, 2023), which is a significant reason why the societal stigmatization against diagnosis should be dismantled. While there is currently no cure for Dementia, early intervention measures can be highly beneficial in prolonging and treating its severity and also allow individuals and their family members who are affected to be able to set up support systems before it is too late.

The main contributing issue when it comes to Dementia is the lack of early adoption of preventive measures to combat the onset and impact of memory loss. Dementia can be an issue that starts suddenly or develops gradually over time, making it easy to mistake for

common memory loss, so it is crucial, regardless of which case scenario it may be, to maintain a healthy lifestyle and practice mindfulness as just these changes alone can significantly improve an individual's cognitive health. Research published by The Lancet Commission (2021) that examined dementia interventions found that 7% of worldwide dementia cases could be prevented by increasing early-life education. When approaching the topic of awareness, it is also essential to address the common misconceptions of Dementia, such as the myth that significant forms of Dementia, such as AD, can be prevented. Learning about the misconceptions will help individuals and society respond better to the realities of the disease (Alzheimer Society of Canada, 2024).

Although there is currently no cure for Dementia, there are still strategies that can help mitigate the effects of memory loss; simple lifestyle adjustments, such as altering your diet or improving sleeping habits, can significantly impact long-term cognitive health concerning memory. According to Mary Anne Dunkin from WebMD (2023), some of the leading causes of memory loss include medications, alcohol, smoking, sleep deprivation, depression, stress, head injury, and, of course, Dementia. Taking these factors into account, general memory loss can be combated by practicing healthy lifestyles and routines. For instance, regular physical exercise has been shown to reduce dementia risk and improve cognitive function in AD patients (Govindugari et al., 2023). Strategies that focus on managing lifestyle factors such as diet, exercise, and social engagement highlight the importance of a healthy lifestyle early on to prevent memory loss or reduce the severity of Dementia and AD (Chia et al., 2023).

These are only a few of the strategies and techniques that can be implemented in people's everyday lives to help improve cognitive function and forgetfulness. Other strategies include learning new skills, getting enough sleep to following a daily routine. These lifestyle changes can make great strides in improving cognitive health. It is also essential to understand

that memory loss can affect diverse groups differently. For example, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] (2019), Hispanic and African Americans in the US will see the most significant increases related to memory loss and Dementia between 2015 and 2060, while according to the WHO (2023), women experience a disproportionate affect of Dementia, directly and indirectly.

As memory loss and Dementia have widespread effects on different individuals, it is essential for the stigmatization against dementia diagnosis to be challenged and for more awareness to be spread. Being able to make these changes will significantly help society as a whole and help to dismantle the barriers, overall creating more understanding around the topic and pushing for more strides in decreasing the severity of Dementia. By removing this stigma, individuals affected with memory loss and Dementia can feel more comfortable seeking out medical advice early on and be able to set up safety measures for the future and even prolong their condition. Removing the stigmatization and fear of diagnosis can also help make strides in the medical field, as doctors and other medical professionals may be able to learn new information that could make significant changes in the industry relating to memory loss and Dementia.

Although there is currently no cure for Dementia and AD, that does not mean research and development are not being pursued. According to the National Health Service [NHS] (2021), it is unlikely that there will be a single cure for Dementia due to the fact that different diseases and underlying factors can cause it. There have been many advances with increased funding over time towards finding a cure, and many research studies and clinical trials are currently taking place. Some of the areas of research include stem cell research, immunotherapy, gene-based therapies, repurposing medicines, and identifying who is at risk of developing Dementia. An example of one of these cases relates to Loris Weiss, a teacher who

noticed that her lessons gradually took longer for her to do. After visiting her doctor, she was diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment, showcasing the hallmarks of AD. Weiss later enrolled in a clinical trial for a drug called donanemab, and since taking it, she has experienced significant and positive changes in her life. While the drug is not yet approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), as of November 2022, the drugmaker Eli Lilly and Company announced promising results (Balch, 2023). This story is only one example of many that showcase the promising future of developing a cure for severe onset cases of Dementia, highlighting the importance of dismantling the stigmatization of dementia diagnosis.

The overarching issue of memory loss is that it is widespread and affects people in various environments, highlighting the importance of spreading awareness and creating initiatives for early detection and treatment (Crous-Bou et al., 2017). Utilizing interactive content and personal stories to build effective awareness campaigns is essential. It is clear that people in this day and age have become more reliant on digital platforms when it comes to gathering information, especially when it comes to health concerns, "Social Media is poised to be a key player in health-related education for both patients and providers" (Isaacson et al., 2018). With this in mind, the strategic use of social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, X, and even LinkedIn, stands out as an essential avenue for spreading awareness about memory loss treatment.

These platforms open the door for the spread of information but also foster community engagement and support, as supported by the Kidney Disease Education Program's findings, which demonstrated that their social media presence resulted in over 10,000 unique impressions and 600 shares of content per month (Isaacson et al., 2018). The broad reach and interactive nature of social media also allow the opportunity to receive real-time feedback and personalized communication, making it an effective tool for raising awareness and educating the

public on the importance of memory health. Dedicated websites and online resources also serve as essential virtual information hubs for individuals seeking to understand, prevent and manage memory loss. These platforms help to provide comprehensive insights into memory health, further offering access to a wide range of materials, including research updates, prevention strategies, care options and support resources, which is essential in this industry.

Digital platforms and targeted educational campaigns have been proven to be powerful tools that can be used to spread information about memory loss awareness and treatment. An example of the power of digital platforms in spreading awareness is showcased by the Alzheimer's Association's strategic use of social media campaigns, notably through their "Our Stories" initiative. This campaign successfully elevates awareness about Alzheimer's disease by empowering individuals to start discussions, highlighting the significance of personal stories in fostering understanding and engagement around Alzheimer's prevention and care (The Shorty Awards, 2021). Overall, digital platforms and targeted educational campaigns and programs can play an important role when it comes to addressing and reducing the severity of memory loss. They are not only informative but also engage and inspire action.

As mentioned before, it is also essential to understand and address that memory loss can affect diverse groups differently, highlighting that it is crucial to tailor digital and educational campaigns to meet the needs and preferences of specific demographics. This process can involve segmenting the audience by age, health status, lifestyle factors, or even genetic history relating to memory-related conditions as "Public health campaigns, when designed and implemented carefully, can influence perceptions, attitudes, and even behaviour to achieve a desired goal" (McGuire et al., 2023). The effectiveness of these campaigns also greatly depends on how information is presented. Engaging content formats such as infographics, videos, and interactive quizzes can also attract attention and facilitate better understanding and

retention of information. "Interactive content is a powerful tool for increasing engagement and retention. By understanding its benefits, utilizing quizzes, polls, interactive infographics, videos, calculators, and continually measuring and optimizing, you can create a more engaging and interactive experience for your audience." (5 Star Visibility Digital Marketing Agency Of Fort Lauderdale, 2023). Overall, creating curated campaigns can achieve greater relevance and impact, fostering a deeper understanding and proactive management of memory health risks.

In conclusion, by harnessing the broad reach and interactive capabilities of social media, dedicated digital platforms, and targeted educational campaigns, significant strides can be made toward enhancing public awareness and encouraging early intervention for cognitive health. The healthcare challenge of memory loss and Dementia is something that society as a whole is uninformed about. It is essential to bring forth more awareness about early memory loss preventative measures and treatment in order to challenge the stigmatization of the topic by asking the question, how can we bring forward more awareness about memory loss and treatment to help improve cognitive health? With this in mind, it is clear that creating more understanding surrounding the topic of memory loss and Dementia is essential, as it will help individuals affected and their families feel more comfortable in seeking help. This, in turn, will help to foster a safe environment for people affected by memory loss and Dementia and allow them to be able to set up safety measures before their condition becomes too severe, even helping to prolong its effects. Challenging the stigmatization and fear of memory loss and dementia diagnosis can also help make drastic strides in the medical world, as it can help pave the way for doctors and other medical professionals to gain more insight into the issue. It is vital to use digital platforms and targeted educational campaigns to raise awareness. They can play an essential role in creating more awareness surrounding memory loss treatment and getting rid of societal barriers, highlighting the importance of cognitive health.

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