

Handout 2: Awareness of Cognitive Decline

The following videos of Live and Learn (L&L) presentations provide definitions of various stages of cognitive decline from

1. normal aging of the brain to
2. mild cognitive impairment (MCI) to
3. dementia.

Kathleen Johnson and Dr Whitesides offer a clear and evidence-based understanding of how our brain ages, including signs of normal cognitive aging, mild cognitive impairment (MCI) and dementia.

- **Live and Learn: Dementia and Alzheimer's 3-25-2024**

Kathleen Johnson, MSN, is an Adult Nurse Practitioner in Neurology at Georgetown University in the Memory Disorders Program

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGbih_5jSyk

- **Live and Learn: Maintaining Healthy Brains as We Age 7-26-2021**

Dr. Louisa Whitesides, George Washington School of Medicine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtoZqRcTk8M>

The slides for this presentation are attached.

Dr Whitesides as well as Dr Amy Sanders discuss strategies for maintaining healthy brains and even slowing cognitive aging, including screening for early diagnosis and the latest available treatments for mild cognitive impairment.

- **Live and Learn: The Complexity of Memory Loss, Alzheimer's vs Lewy Bodies Dementia 2 2025**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8cNdmLRvpU>

Amy Sanders, Sunday Health

- Notes from a webinar with Dr. Amy Sanders on **Cognitive Tests: What are they and why should they be a part of every older adult health routine.**

Cognition

- Defined: thinking in 5 domains: attention, language, executive function (ex: planning, abstract reasoning, visual-spatial orientation (ex: map reading, packing a suitcase, copying a diagram) and memory.
- Changes naturally over time
- **Cognitive testing** helps measure the changes over time. It's an umbrella term. A neuropsych assessment takes 3-4 hours; a cognitive screening is much shorter.
- Cognitive testing could be a requirement of every annual check-up and should start at age 35. Results can be optimal, typical for aging, mild cognitive impairment and dementia, the extreme of which is Alzheimer's Disease

- Cognitive abilities come from genetics, the environment and experience
- Things that can contribute to poor assessment results include: anxiety, inadequate nutrition, sleep deprivation, absence of friendships, sundowning, lack of activity, other medical conditions, and reaction to/side effect from a medication. Pre-dementia can be a fluid state due to any one of these things.
- Cognitive testing establishes a baseline, helps to understand risk factors, identifies underlying issues (like low B-12 and any of the other above contributors), helps to plan ahead for independence and safety including the ability to drive and travel.

Drugs used in early stages of dementia are fairly new to the scene. They are Leqembi and Donanemab. They are administered by infusion, only by a doctor, to deal with abnormal amyloid proteins which can be detected with a PET scan; a blood test and spinal fluid help determine amyloid ratio (didn't really understand this).

Sunday Health (www.sundayhealth.com; (571-517-1564); email: hello@sundayhealth.com), an online organization that specializes in cognitive care for older adults virtually. Sunday Health, which provides telehealth services, uses the following procedure:

- Intake phone call to see if need matches services offered
- Preparation/appointment for telehealth visit
- Telehealth visit (60-90 minutes): medical history, meds, cognitive history.
- Labs and imaging re brain health
- Neuropsych testing including input from a friend or family member who knows you well (60 min)
- Discussion of results with Dr Sanders, a neurologist and recommendations.