Jessica Neel

Short Assignment 1

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In the article, “Detective Work: The False Alzheimer’s Diagnosis,” author Melinda Beck enlightens readers on the overwhelming misdiagnoses of Alzheimer’s to elderly patients. She tells the story of man, J. D. Cain, who showed symptoms of Alzheimer’s, being diagnosed by experts with Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease. After being examined by a neurologist, J. D. Cain’s diagnosis changed again to a buildup of fluid in the brain. After draining the fluid, J. D. Cain returned back to his normal, fun, and happy self. In the article, J. D. Cain explains, “It was just like getting my life back.” There are more than 100 symptoms and conditions that can resemble Alzheimer’s disease and lead to a misdiagnosis. Certain medications, including antianxiety drugs, sleeping pills, and muscle relaxants, can even cause similar Alzheimer’s disease side effects, such as, memory loss and dementia. When performing autopsies, researchers reported between 17% and 30% of those people diagnosed with Alzheimer’s were misdiagnosed. Furthermore, 40% of patients that are not diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease actually do suffer from it. Because of the high number of misdiagnoses, a new PET scan has been developed to spot buildups that help confirm Alzheimer’s disease. A study showed 9% to 14% of the participants researched possessed this fluid buildup. Recent research has suggested these fluid buildups, also known as “silent emboli,” can actually be drained by surgically implanted shunts, which allows for the patients to show significant improvement. Doctors and experts need to ensure to not misdiagnose patients, in fear of giving false hope.

 The article relates to the topic of cognitive aging discussed in class. Someone’s cognitive ability is an important quality of their individual identity. The textbook, *Adult Development and Aging: Biopscyhosocial Perspectives,* devotes an entire section of a chapter to Alzheimer’s disease. Also known as, senile dementia, presenile dementia, and organic brain disorder, Alzheimer’s disease is the diagnosis of the linkage between the changes in the brain tissue and cognitive symptoms. The life expectancy of one diagnosed with Alzheimer’s is 7 to 10 years. The course of Alzheimer’s disease begins with short term memory loss and disorientation. The final stage of Alzheimer’s disease is the impairment of speech and severe cognitive abilities. The diagnosis of Alzheimer’s is only accomplished by ruling out other disorders. There is not a specific test or procedure that can ensure a patient has Alzheimer’s disease. One cannot be completely certain until an autopsy is performed; however, testing methods are constantly improving with technology.

 The article explains the growing concern of the misdiagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease in aging adults. This is a critical concern because Alzheimer’s disease is the most common form of dementia, affecting 7% of adults 65 and older, as mentioned by the text book. Because Alzheimer’s disease is reported to be the most common form of dementia, it is important that patients are not misdiagnosed by experts and doctors, crippling people to not live to their fullest potential. If the real causes of patients’ memory fogs are due to medicine or other health issues, then prescribing medication for Alzheimer’s disease will not help them. The text books also mentions the improvement of technology methods to test patients for Alzheimer’s disease, which is similar to the new PET scan the article explains, but both pieces of literature explains the only positive determining factor of this disease is an autopsy. It is crucial for patients to not be misdiagnosed, because the effects of Alzheimer’s disease are extreme.

Works Cited

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