

reflection

Anniversary Issue

Mercy Hospital and Medical Center / Chicago

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MERCY



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Mercy's Alzheimer's Center Offering Patients the Latest Medications

At Mercy's Alzheimer's Disease Center, patients receive a wide range of options for controlling the disease through medication and other techniques.

Neurologist Andy Plioplys, M.D., head of the Alzheimer's Disease Center, oversees a dedicated team of highly skilled scientists who are investigating the causes of the disease and trying to determine which medications work best for each patient.

Also, because we are one of the few hospitals affiliated with the Alzheimer's Network at Rush Presbyterian-St. Luke's Hospital, our patients can participate in a number of nation-wide drug and clinical studies.

Recently, the Food and Drug Administration has approved the use of Tacrine (brand name Cognex), the first medicine shown to have any effect on the devastating symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. "This medicine is not a cure for the disease, but it can provide some relief for patients and their families," Dr. Plioplys said. The medicine is expected to help patients with mild to moderate cases of the disease.

Dr. Plioplys will be pursuing the use of Cognex for his patients as soon as the new drug is available in pharmacies. "Only about one third of the patients will be eligible for taking Cognex, depending on the results of their liver function blood test," Dr. Plioplys said. "It is anticipated that of those who can take Cognex, one third will see an improvement."

Other prescription medications already available to patients at Mercy's Alzheimer's Disease Center are Eldepryl and Indomethacin. Eldepryl has shown to slow the progression of the disease in European studies and it is also used to treat patients with Parkinson's disease. Indomethacin, an anti-inflammatory drug prescribed for rheumatoid arthritis, has also shown positive results in a Canadian study.



Once a diagnosis of Alzheimer's is confirmed, Dr. Plioplys and social worker Jeanette Kilrea, LSW, consult closely with the patient and family to assess the special needs of each patient and tailor a plan of care.

Alzheimer's is a lethal brain disorder that robs its victims of their memory and ability to reason. The disease strikes one of every ten people over the age of 65, as well as many in their forties and fifties. Half of all people over age 85 will develop symptoms of Alzheimer's, which may include confusion and personality changes.

The disease affects not only patients but those who love them, because people with Alzheimer's become increasingly dependent on others as their illness progresses. Realizing this, Mercy offers the following support services for families and loved ones:

- ♦ *Alzheimer's Support Group* - allow family and friends to share experiences and suggestions; meets regularly at the hospital and many of Mercy's satellite facilities
- ♦ *Respite Care Services* - permit caregivers to take time off from their responsibilities while their loved ones receive excellent care from skilled professionals in a comfortable environment
- ♦ *Home Health Care Services* - assist with nursing or home making tasks for patients who are incapacitated

For more information on any of the above services or the Alzheimer's Disease Center at Mercy, please call (312) 567-7900.

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Yvonne Dabrowski



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