

Frontotemporal Dementia



University of Michigan
Health System

Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Research Center

Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD) refers to a group of diseases that damage the frontal or temporal lobes of the brain, resulting in significant changes in personality, behavior and language ability. Examples of FTD include Pick's disease, Frontotemporal Dementia with Motor Neuron Disease, and Corticobasal degeneration (CBD). FTD accounts for only about 5% of all dementia cases in the U.S., but may account for more than 10% of dementia in younger patients.

CAUSE

The cause of FTD is not known. In FTD, a normal brain protein called tau accumulates abnormally and forms deposits. In some cases, FTD is inherited due to a genetic mutation in the tau protein. However, FTD can also develop in individuals who have no family history of dementia.

SYMPTOMS

FTD usually begins with gradual changes in personality, behavior or

speech. People with FTD may also have motor difficulties similar to those with Parkinson's disease, such as rigidity and slowness of movement. Memory loss is present in FTD, but less obvious than in Alzheimer's disease. Other symptoms can include:

- decreased speech;
- inability to name common objects;
- loss of motivation;
- lack of concern or sympathy for others;
- inappropriate social or sexual behavior;
- rigid, inflexible thinking; and
- compulsive, repetitive behaviors.

DIAGNOSIS

FTD is sometimes misdiagnosed as a psychiatric problem. An accurate diagnosis is critical and should be made after a thorough discussion of symptoms, a careful medical history, examination of behavioral changes, a physical exam and other testing. Blood tests and brain scans are often performed. MRI or

CT scans may show abnormalities in the frontal or temporal lobes of the brain. PET or SPECT scans may be helpful in distinguishing FTD from other causes of dementia. The majority of people diagnosed with FTD are between the ages of 40 and 65. The diagnosis may be confirmed after death with a brain autopsy.

PROGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

FTD worsens over time (years) and impairs the individual's ability to live and function independently. Although there is no cure for FTD, medications can help control the behavioral symptoms of the disorder. Antidepressants and antipsychotic medications may be prescribed.

RESOURCES

More information about FTD can be found at: www.ftd-picks.org
1-866-507-7222