

Alzheimer's disease: We can reduce the risk

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Submitted by [Irving Vega](#) [2] on 15 March 2016 - 1:16am



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This week we celebrate "Brain Awareness Week". Today we share some information regarding Alzheimer's disease. To your health!

Recently, [Dr. Irving Vega](#) [3], Associate Professor at Michigan State University, presented his talk "Research on Alzheimer's disease: from bench to society". On the occasion of the "Brain Awareness Week" celebration, we share [the video](#) [4] of his talk and an article written by Dr. Vega. This is the first of multiple posts that we will be sharing with you this week exploring different conditions related to the health of our brain.

Alzheimer's disease is an epidemic that affects everyone. It is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States and ranks fourth in Puerto Rico. Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia in people over 65 years old and currently over 14 million people suffer from this disease worldwide. In the United States, there are about 5.3 million reported cases and every 67 seconds someone develops Alzheimer's disease. Moreover, it is estimated that the number of Hispanics / Latinos with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias will increase to more than 1.3 million cases by 2025. Economically, last year, this epidemic represented the federal health system in the United States a cost up to \$226 billion and these health expenses are expected to reach by 2050 the sum of \$1.1 trillion. This amount does not include additional family expenses and the unpaid

hours dedicated to caregiving.

Epidemiological studies indicate that the Latino community is more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than other ethnic groups. Although the exact reasons are unknown, a correlation has been established between the high incidence of metabolic diseases such as diabetes and high cholesterol levels, and the development of Alzheimer's disease in the Latino population. Obesity, hypertension and cerebrovascular diseases are also considered as risk factors for developing Alzheimer's disease in Latinos.

From all the demographics that have been correlated with higher incidence of Alzheimer's disease, low socioeconomic status and education were also identified as risk factors. Low socioeconomic levels are related to lack of access to high quality education, preventive health care, high-risk behaviors and lack of information that would assist the early detection of symptoms associated with Alzheimer's disease. The lack of social equity and access to health care may be one of the biggest risk factors for developing Alzheimer's disease. All these risk factors associated with a high prevalence of Alzheimer's disease in the Latino community are modifiable, so education and prevention can be key to reducing the risk of developing this devastating disease.

At present, there is no drug that prevents, stops or reverses the development of Alzheimer's disease. Long-term studies have shown that the pathological processes, changes in brain structure, may begin up to 20 years before the first symptoms appear. However, so far there is no way to identify whether these processes are occurring or how fast is the degenerative process taking place in the brain of asymptomatic individuals.

Alzheimer's Disease Research: From Bench to Society [4] from MSU MD [5] on Vimeo [6].

So, **what can we do?** Several studies indicate that a healthy lifestyle where a balanced diet (vegetables and fruits such as grapes), an exercise routine, vitamin B12 and vitamin E supplements, and natural antioxidants like those found in green tea and red wine, may reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Furthermore, it is important to reduce stress, eliminate all concerns that lead to disease and can even cause depression. Sleeplessness has also been correlated with the development of Alzheimer's disease. Therefore, part of a healthy life is to rest and adopt a good sleeping habit.

Changing lifestyles that lead us to be at risk of developing Alzheimer's disease is something we can all do to prevent this epidemic from continuing. In the meantime, the scientific community will continue to work to decipher the molecular processes associated with this terrible disease in order to develop better treatments. But as is the case for other diseases, awareness and prevention are good tools that should be available to everyone.

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