



The Aging Brain

The September issue of the *Public Policy and Aging* e-newsletter offered a wealth of information on brain research, timely and fitting with this issue's article titled "Use It or Lose It" (see p. 25).

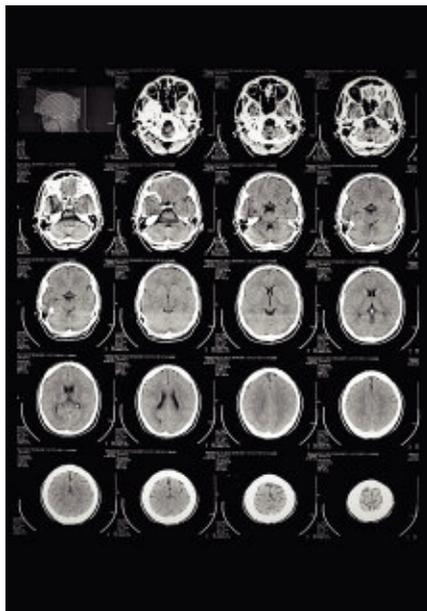
The editors of the newsletter stated that "policymakers and policy analysts should consider the likely implications of recent research on how we view older people's capacity to participate in society." Although 100 years ago scientists thought it was impossible to teach an old dog new tricks, today we know that elders can still learn, contribute to the workforce, and engage in civic activities. Resources provided by the e-newsletter include:

Road Map to Cognitive Health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Alzheimer's Association released the first-ever "National Public Health Road Map to Maintaining Cognitive Health." The Road Map seeks to raise the public's awareness about cognitive health and increase the nation's commitment to understanding both the risks for cognitive decline and ways of maintaining brain health. See: www.alz.org/preventionconference/pc2007/releases/61007_8am_roadmap.asp.

The Brain Changes as it Ages, Sometimes in Surprising Ways. A report by the Population Reference Bureau discusses research that may reduce the strain of worldwide aging, which is predicted to have an enormous impact on labor forces, healthcare systems, and family support networks. See: www.prb.org/Articles/2007/BrainChanges.aspx.

AARP's Staying Sharp Program. This joint project of the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives and NRTA, AARP's Educator Community, focuses on understanding how the brain works and how we can maximize brain function and brain health. See: www.aarp.org/health/brain/program/.

Cognitive Aging: Imaging, Emotion, and Memory. The National Institute on Aging (NIA) examines cognitive function in older adults, particularly ways in which they think differently and what can be done to enhance cognition or strengthen thought processes. See: www.prb.org/pdf07/TodaysResearchAging5.pdf.



2005-2006 Progress Report on Alzheimer's Disease. The goal of "Journey to Discovery: The National Institute on Aging's Alzheimer's Disease (AD)" research program is to enhance the quality of life of older people by expanding knowledge about the aging brain and nervous system. See: www.nia.nih.gov/Alzheimers/Publications/ADProgress2005_2006/.

Does Your Facility's Menu Offer Enough Fish—Omega-3?

A diet rich in fish, omega-3 oils, fruits, and vegetables may lower the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease, according to a study published in the November 13, 2007, issue of *Neurology* (see:

www.neurology.org/cgi/content/abstract/69/20/1921).

The study found that people who regularly consumed omega-3 rich oils, such as canola oil, flaxseed oil, and walnut oil, reduced their risk of dementia by 60% compared to people who did not regularly consume such oils. Those who ate fruits and vegetables each day also lowered their risk of dementia by 30% compared to those who didn't.

Eating fish at least once a week resulted in a 35% lower risk of Alzheimer's disease and 40% lower risk of dementia, but only if the individual did not carry the gene that increases the risk of Alzheimer's, called *apolipoprotein E4*, or ApoE4.

People who did not carry the ApoE4 gene and consumed an unbalanced diet characterized by regular use of omega-6 rich oils (sunflower or grape seed oil), but not omega-3 rich oils or fish, were twice as likely to develop dementia compared to those who didn't eat omega-6 rich oils. There was no association with lowered risk of dementia among those who consumed corn oil, peanut oil, lard, meat, or wine.



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