

Investigating dementia worry and its impact on older adults

<https://neurodegenerationresearch.eu/survey/investigating-dementia-worry-and-its-impact-on-older-adults/>

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1

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Research Abstract

Project Summary/Abstract Rates of dementia diagnoses and personal experience with dementia are staggering. Dementia's impact is wide ranging, affecting the lives of those diagnosed as well as their caregivers, friends, and family. Therefore, people may worry about the possibility of

developing dementia well before they do (if they ever do). Indeed, almost one third of an adult population surveyed identified dementia as their most feared disease, second only to cancer (MetLife, 2011). The proposed research will focus on dementia worry – the anxiety about dementia prior to symptoms or diagnosis. Because dementia worry can exist in persons of varying age and cognitive status, it is important to investigate this phenomenon among middle-aged and older adults. In spite of the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease and related disorders (ADRD), understanding of dementia, its causes, and symptoms remains low. Increasing awareness of ADRD combined with minimal understanding of ADRD is believed to pose a potent threat to adults of all ages, particularly middle-aged and older individuals. People with high dementia worry are believed to view ADRD as threatening due to the high perceived negativity of dementia, high perceived risk of ADRD, and low perceived control or means for prevention. There is currently little research concerning the impact of dementia worry on daily life, psychological functioning, and future planning. Using experimental methods, the proposed research will induce different levels of dementia worry experimentally (based on commonly encountered environmental cues such as ageist stereotypes, prevalence statistics, and dementia awareness campaigns) to assess some potential psychological and health-related consequences of dementia worry. Finally, we will investigate ways to reduce dementia worry, taking the initial steps in developing and assessing the immediate and short-term impact of interventions, with our final study including a three month follow-up to determine if beneficial effects may last. Consistent with NIH's mission to increase understanding of mental disorders and NIA's mission to support research designed to improve the health and well-being of older adults, the proposed studies will increase understanding of dementia worry, its impact on functioning and psychological well-being, with the goal of identifying pragmatic interventions to reduce dementia worry and improve well-being.

Further information available at:

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