

### Transcript Details

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## Examining Unmet Needs in Alzheimer's Disease

### Announcer Introduction:

You're listening to *Alzheimer's Disease: Towards Earlier Detection* on ReachMD. On this episode, sponsored by Lilly, we'll hear from Dr. Peter Whitehouse, who's a Professor of Neurology at Case Western Reserve University. Dr. Whitehouse is here to help us examine unmet needs in Alzheimer's disease care. Let's hear from him now.

### Dr. Whitehouse:

Obtaining key statistics about the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease is actually a complicated challenge worldwide. That's because Alzheimer's disease is not one condition. And it occurs on the spectrum of aging, with research categories like mild cognitive impairment that tend to confuse people about just what Alzheimer's disease is. However, we know that the problem of memory challenges or cognitive challenges are growing worldwide because the number of older people are growing, particularly those over the age of 85, who are at greater risk for these kinds of conditions. So it's a huge problem, but it has to be framed properly, understanding that Alzheimer's disease is not one thing and it is related to aging.

I think the word therapeutic is an important word to consider when you ask what the challenges are for professional caregivers and lay caregivers. It seems to imply a medical model of care. And actually, people with cognitive challenges as they grow old really need a comprehensive bio or eco psychosocial approach, which includes not just medical therapies, but attention to the needs of the patient and the caregiver in the community.

The challenges that can be addressed, sometimes with medicines but often without, include behavioral symptoms where people become agitated or anxious. Those should be managed non pharmacologically before they're managed pharmacologically.

Clinicians face barriers, despite the efforts of a lot of people, that include confusion about what this condition is. The National Alzheimer's Association has been promoting rather simplistic thinking that it's just a matter of time and money before we find a cure for this one thing. Well, it's not one thing. And so people have different ideas about what brain aging is all about and how to address it.

There's a lot of challenges to providing care for patients with cognitive impairments, probably the most important one is the misunderstanding about brain aging itself and the various conditions that can affect it, and the fact that our healthcare system, the long-term care system particularly, is not designed to help people with cognitive challenges.

So the clinician and the patient and the family need to work together to appreciate the needs of that individual patient and to see how a combination of medical therapeutics, but largely social interventions, can help improve the quality of life of both the patient and the caregiver.

### Announcer Close

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