

# Mild cognitive impairment is not quite so mild

By Joel S. Ross M.D.

**M**ild cognitive impairment (MCI) is a common ailment of older adults (ages 50 and over). What is MCI? Simply defined, it is a condition where an individual's memory is impaired greater for what can be expected for their age.

When loved ones tell you the forgetfulness is serious it likely is MCI. Since millions of Americans have MCI, how do you know if it is due to a serious neurological condition such as Alzheimer's disease?

At my Memory Enhancement Center we are conducting the latest breakthrough tests both in clinical practice as well as in clinical research testing programs. We take Medicare for tests conducted.

I and my team are part of the Alzheimer's research community, with the responsibility of evaluating volunteers suffering from MCI/Alzheimer's disease to consider clinical trials as an alternative to accepting their fate in the face of a condition we know to be fatal. Without a known, truly effective treatment available, as of yet, pursuing an FDA-approved clinical trial investigating a possible treatment for Alzheimer's disease would seem to be a reasonable course of action for an individual. Why is it, then, that out of 100 people diagnosed with this disease on average, only two are enrolled in research?

One must first consider that the course of this disease after an initial diagnosis can run its course over a period of 10 years. The pathology is sometimes present in the brain an additional 10 years before the first



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symptoms appears. When confronted with a disease process of this length there is a tendency by many individuals to accept a lessening of cognitive abilities as a normal occurrence and a willingness to replace it with compensating support from their family and friends. This becomes a trap for both the patient and the caregiver. Although both parties to this arrangement are comfortable at first, this relationship will eventually disintegrate as the months turn into years. In a research environment, I have seen the bonds between husband and wife and child and parent strengthen over time. The very act of doing "something" rather than accepting one's fate can be both emotionally and physically thera-

peutic.

In the never-ending effort of finding that "golden bullet" that might positively modify this disease process, it lacks the humanitarian approach that is needed to populate these critical research programs.

There is no charge to individuals or to their insurance who are seeking to get an expert opinion as to the cause of their memory loss. After undergoing memory tests, I decide that further testing is warranted, and examinations such as an MRI and PET scan of the brain might be suggested. These two are covered by most insurance carriers including Medicare.

If the results are considered normal for the age of the patient with MCI or sus-

pected Alzheimer's dementia, then there will be no need for Alzheimer's disease programs or treatments.

If the results are suggestive of MCI due to early Alzheimer's disease as the cause of MCI, or if the tests are consistent with Alzheimer's dementia, we will offer a comprehensive treatment plan. This might include starting or continuing on the four FDA-approved Alzheimer's disease medications, or if the tests are normal, coming off these medications.

*The office of Dr. Joel S. Ross is Memorial Enhancement Center, 4 Industrial Way West, second floor, Eatontown. For more information, call 732-379-7768 or visit www.memorycenternj.com.*

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## Crest Physical Therapy welcomes new therapist

Crest Physical Therapy welcomes Raisa Sigalova, who is a physical therapist in the West Long Branch location.

Sigalova graduated from Farleigh Dickinson University with an associate's degree in physical therapy. She furthered her education and received her bachelor of science degree and master of science degree in physical therapy from the College of Staten Island.

Sigalova has been practicing physical therapy for 15 years and has gained experience in sub acute, acute and outpatient settings. For the past eight years, she has been concentrating on working with adults, geriatric and pediatric orthopedic and sports medicine rehabilitation. She implements manual-based treatments and works hand and hand with her patients and physicians to maximize functional outcome to effectively and efficiently return her patients to their desired activity level.

Sigalova is fluent in Russian and Ukrainian languages.

For more information about Crest Physical Therapy, call 732-759-8358 or visit [www.crestphysicaltherapy.com](http://www.crestphysicaltherapy.com).