Meet Jerry Gonyo

“TODAAT – take one day at a time” – is the code phrase that IU Health Foundation supporter Jerry Gonyo lives by. But as a caregiver for a loved one with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease, that phrase is more often than not easier said than done.

Jerry’s wife, Darlene, was diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) in 2002. They married in 1963, had two children, and were living in Arizona. After Darlene’s diagnosis, Jerry retired so he could spend as much time, and make as many memories, with his wife as possible.

The decade that followed saw Darlene’s memory and cognitive ability decline. In 2012, she was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s. “At that time,” Jerry says, “we had done all that we could do.” Darlene began receiving home care and eventually moved into an assisted living facility, but by 2016, their adult children were concerned, not only about their mother, but about Jerry’s well-being too.

The couple moved to Bloomington to be close to family, and Darlene moved into a facility where she could have around-the-clock care. It was there, in Bloomington, that Jerry first became involved with the IU Health Alzheimer’s and Dementia Resource Service (ADRS), which provides support to professional and family caregivers.

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Meet Jerry Gonyo, continued

Through it all, Jerry continued taking things one day at a time. And even as Darlene’s memories faded, Jerry worked to keep them alive. He gathered their extensive collection of scrapbooks and family photo albums, and on good days, would flip through them with Darlene, reminiscing on a lifetime filled with adventures, family and love. Jerry even began decorating her room with photos and keepsakes, calling it a hands-on, visual way to remember their life together.

During this time, Jerry’s involvement with ADRS increased. He attended support groups, orchestrated events, and began volunteering as much as possible. After Darlene’s passing, Jerry wanted to do even more. “We had a good life together,” he says, and because I had a good career, I felt I could share financially and help somebody else extend their life, or find a good support group.”

That is exactly what Jerry does — funding matching gifts for all donations made to the ADRS during IU Health Foundation campaigns. The funds go to provide support and resources to caregivers just like Jerry, who know firsthand what a difficult disease this is.

As an active member of the Bloomington Community Dementia Alliance (CDA), Jerry started his involvement in the Alzheimer’s Walk in 2012 in Arizona including walks, support groups and the Banner Alzheimer’s Institute which included being involved with clinical studies. He has helped raise more than $100,000 for Alzheimer’s Walks and local groups.

Jerry joined the Walk to End Alzheimer’s in Bloomington in 2017 as part of the Memory Marchers Team and has been co-captain for the past four years. He is a Champion Level Fundraiser for the Alzheimer’s Association. This year’s walk is Sunday, September 11, 2022 at the Pavilion at Switchyard Park, 1601 S Rogers St. in Bloomington, IN. Make plans to join a team or donate now!

He strongly supports the Alzheimer’s and Dementia Resource Services and encourages your giving. He matches donations dollar for dollar to double the impact for local families.

For more information on the Walk to End Alzheimer’s Bloomington or the IU Health Foundation ADRS donation reach out to Jerry at: Jerrygonyo@comcast.net.
Tips for Improving Memory Health

Keep Your Brain Active To Improve Memory Health

Physical activities and diet changes aren’t the only ways to preserve brain function. Keeping your brain sharp — and happy — can improve cognitive abilities. Learning new things and practicing existing skills can train your brain to stay active and capable.

Learn Something New

Take a class to learn new skills. One study of 359 adults ages 59 to 70 who took a year of college classes showed they were more likely to have better cognitive abilities than their peers in the following years.

It’s especially useful to learn one specific skill, such as painting or drawing, a musical instrument, or a new language. Concentrate on this one new activity to get the most out of your brain training, and schedule your practice time. Practice is the most important part of gaining cognitive benefits. It doesn’t matter how much your skill improves. The important part is that you exercise your brain through practice itself.

You don’t need to travel far from home to gain a new skill. With online classes now available, you can learn something new from the comfort of your home. In addition, adding a new level of skill to an existing hobby can have the same cognitive benefits.

Enjoy Puzzles and Games

Popular word and number puzzles, like Sudoku and crosswords, are great ways to hone your thinking skills. In a study of 19,078 older adults, those who regularly did crossword puzzles or Sudoku had better cognitive performance than those who did not. Scientists think that working on these puzzles engages different parts of the brain, helping connect both short- and long-term memories. Jigsaw puzzles are also useful as brain training. Just like Sudoku and crosswords, jigsaw puzzle practice stimulates brain processes linked to perception and memory.

Socialize

“Being connected to other people is paramount to maintaining your cognitive functioning,” Dr. Davis said. Researchers have found that older people who participated in social programs were less likely to have cognitive decline. These social programs included: arts and crafts, singing, playing musical instruments, and/or volunteering with preschool-age children.

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Tips for Improving Memory Health, continued

Staying in touch with friends and family is also important. Close friendships with other people might prevent cognitive decline. If you can’t get in touch with loved ones in person, talking on the phone or video chatting with friends and family are great options.

Find Support for Memory Health

You don’t have to feel alone when dealing with mild cognitive impairment. Members of the CDA or other organizations such as myALZteam are always available to answer questions and offer encouragement when things get rough.

If you or a loved one has mild cognitive impairment, what do you do to improve memory health? Are there activities or games you enjoy?

CDA Mission

A subcommittee of Dementia Friendly Bloomington, we are persons who are living with, or caring for, someone with Dementia.

From our growing personal experiences, we work at reimagining our lives, advocate for caregivers, and empower professionals as we grow in our understanding of Dementia.

For more information or if you would like to join the CDA in their mission, contact Amanda Mosier at amosier1@iuhealth.org or call 812-353-9310.

Get Involved

The Community Dementia Alliance meets monthly on the second Wednesday each month at 10 am. To get details or join us, email Amanda at amosier1@iuhealth.org.

Join the Care Partner’s Book Club! Contact Jerry Gonyo at jerrygonya@comcast.net

Find more information about events and more at www.dfbloomington.org or call 812-353-9310.
Learning about the 4 Main Types of Dementia

More than 6 million in the U.S. have dementia. It’s no wonder so many caregivers are looking for tips on boosting seniors’ quality of life and finding activities for dementia patients.

Only decades ago, people were still writing off dementia related behaviors to senility. Now researchers have an ever increasing understanding of the brain, which has allowed them to better identify new brain disorders, including the types of dementia.

Dementia is not a specific diagnosis on its own. Rather, dementia is a general term for any severe decline in mental abilities due to the brain's physical deterioration. Not all types of dementia are the same.

There are four common forms of clinical dementia:
- Alzheimer’s Disease
- Vascular dementia
- Dementia with Lewy Body
- Frontotemporal Dementia

Let's take a closer look at these common types of dementia.

Types of Dementia

1. Alzheimer's Disease

According to the Alzheimer’s Association, more than 5 million Americans are living with this disease. An individual is diagnosed every 67 seconds. Alzheimer’s Disease is the country’s sixth leading cause of death. While the precise causes of Alzheimer's disease are unknown, research indicates that it stems from a mix of the following: Hereditary factors, Lifestyle factors, and Environmental factors.

Mayo Clinic reports that in less than 1% of cases, a specific genetic change leads to the development of the disease. Symptoms of Alzheimer's include the following: Memory loss, Confusion, Trouble Communicating, Anxiety, and Paranoia,

While there is no cure, many therapies can improve the quality of life for people with Alzheimer's. Because of its prevalence, the U.S. government has prioritized Alzheimer's

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Learning about the 4 Main Types of Dementia, continued

research, hoping to find a cure by 2025.

2. Vascular Dementia

Also referred to as "post stroke dementia" and "multi infarct dementia," vascular dementia claims the second spot on the list of most common types of dementia. According to some estimates, vascular dementia may account for as many as 20 percent of the total number of all dementia cases.

While vascular dementia occurs when stroke restricts blood flow to the brain, not all people with stroke will develop this type of dementia. The symptoms of vascular dementia vary depending on what region of the brain is affected. Symptoms may include the following:

- Short term memory problems
- Getting lost in familiar areas
- Inappropriate laughter or crying
- Difficulty with concentration
- Money management problems
- Trouble following instructions
- Lack of bowel or bladder control
- Hallucinations

Vascular dementia shares risk factors for stroke, including smoking, diabetes, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure. And while there's no treatment for vascular dementia, early diagnosis and behavioral interventions can prevent further damage.

3. Lewy Body Dementia (LBD)

Also called cortical Lewy body disease or diffuse Lewy body disease, LBD affects an estimated 1.4 million people in the U.S. It is the third most common cause of dementia. Because the symptoms closely mimic other diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, LBD is frequently underdiagnosed.

LBD is caused by the appearance of abnormal proteins in nerve cells which impair and impede normal functioning.

Symptoms of LBD include the following:

- Sleep problems
- Memory loss
- Hallucinations
- Variations in alertness

While it can take up to two years for symptoms to reach levels where they can be

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Learning about the 4 Main Types of Dementia, continued

diagnosed, early detection leads to better outcomes. There is no cure, but treatment methods include medication as well as non medical options, such as physical, speech, and occupational therapy.

4. Frontotemporal Degeneration (FTD)

FTD is also known as frontotemporal dementia, frontotemporal lobar degeneration (FTLD), or Pick’s disease. It affects between 50,000 and 60,000 Americans, according to the Association for Frontotemporal Degeneration.

FTD differs from other types of dementia in two significant ways: While it affects a person’s behavior, personality, language, and ability to function, memory is usually unaffected. It is also thought of as a “young” person’s disease as the average diagnosis age is 60.

Symptoms of FTD include the following:
• Decreased inhibition
• Loss of motivation
• Reduced empathy
• Compulsive behaviors
• Anxiety
• Depression

Like other forms of dementia, frontotemporal dementia has no cure, but there are effective medical and non medical interventions for treating symptoms.

While any diseases or conditions that cause brain damage can be categorized as dementia, understanding these four main types and knowing what to look for can help caregivers ensure that their loved ones get prompt medical treatment.

Save the Date!

Crowne Plaza Hotel • Union Station • Downtown • Indianapolis, Indiana

All Aboard!
Join us at this majestic historical hotel. Built in 1888 as a train station, this special setting is a fitting place for this memorable conference that will feature speakers living with dementia and many others creating a better society in which to live with dementia.

Find information at DAANOW.org.

September 19-21, 2022

Early Bird Registration just $495 until July 31st!
Community Dementia Alliance
of Bloomington, Indiana

P.O. Box 1149
Bloomington, IN 47402