

Health Bulletin



New Screening Tool Helps Detect Alzheimer's

(NAPSA)—An 86-year-old man gets lost in his own neighborhood. A 62-year-old woman forgets once familiar names. Memory problems can be frustrating and confusing for families and they may be signs of something more serious, such as Alzheimer's disease.

"Families ask 'How much of this is normal aging?'" says Dean Knudson, M.D., geriatric psychiatrist and Medical Director of Nation's CareLink. Now, for the first time, many individuals can be screened for Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia in the privacy of their home, via a telephone interview.

"The Minnesota Cognitive Acuity Screen (MCAS) is an excellent first course of action when loved ones experience memory problems," says Knudson, who co-developed the screening tool to alleviate or identify concerns. "Early detection (of Alzheimer's and dementia) means greater opportunity to assess medication, long-term care and other options."

The MCAS telephone interview is conducted by a registered nurse, trained to screen for cognitive problems. Designed and validated by a team of scientists during a two-year period, the MCAS has been found to identify mild/moderate dementia over 98 percent of the time. MCAS questions relate to a person's basic orientation, problem solving, memory and reasoning skills. The interview takes only 15 minutes to complete and results are mailed within 24 hours after the MCAS has been completed. Individuals are advised to contact their physicians to discuss the results.

"There are many causes of memory problems and confusion, and some of them can be treated," says Yogesh Shah, M.D., a geriatric physician and Associate Director at the Mercy Mayo clinic in Des Moines, Iowa. "Early detec-



Answering the call for an easier way to tell if someone has Alzheimer's Disease is a new telephone interview program.

tion of dementia means families have more cause for hope as additional, better treatment and care options become available."

"The MCAS provides a much needed bridge between expensive medical evaluations and the so-called 'watchful waiting' option," adds Knudson. With the cost of a telephone screening at \$95, the MCAS offers an affordable and convenient first step for detecting mild or moderate dementia. It is intended to help individuals and their physician determine whether further evaluation is needed. The results of the MCAS should not be used for making medical treatment decisions without a diagnosis by a physician.

Based in Minneapolis, Nation's CareLink is a national health assessments company that develops health screening services and cognitive assessment tools used by insurance companies, physicians and other healthcare providers. For more information about the Minnesota Cognitive Acuity Screen, contact the MCAS Center at 1-866-884-6100 or visit www.cognitivescreening.com.