

*The Memory & Aging Project
at Washington University
School of Medicine and
Barnes-Jewish Hospital is a
long-term study of intellectual
functioning in persons as they
age. Our efforts are designed
to provide information on the
aging process in healthy older
persons and in those diag-
nosed as having a dementia of
the Alzheimer type or another
related disorder.*

Memory Loss and Alzheimer's Disease

Serious memory loss is not part of normal aging, but rather the exception. Occasional forgetfulness does not signal illness. Approximately 85% of adults over age 65 have little or no memory impairment.

Public awareness of Alzheimer's disease has grown recently and has led to increased concern and worry. However, the illness affects only about 7-10% of those over the age of 65. There are many other possible causes for memory loss in older adults, some of which are reversible. A thorough investigation of worrisome symptoms is appropriate so that a diagnosis can be made.

Our History

The Memory & Aging Project was initially funded in July 1979 with a three-year grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. At that time, 120 volunteers were enrolled in the study. The initial grant was extended for one year, after which the Retirement Research Foundation and the St. Louis business community provided support for continuing research. In January 1984, the National Institute on Aging (NIA) awarded us a five-year grant to enable the project to continue studying the original group of volunteers and to enroll new participants. In October 1985, we were designated an NIA Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (ADRC). Our success has continued with renewals of both our Healthy Aging and ADRC grant awards. In November 2005, the NIA awarded us a third project grant for our Adult Children Study. In addition to such government grants, we continue to receive generous support from private donors.



*Clinical nurse specialist, Mary Coats, MSN,
checks the blood pressure of a study participant.*



Memory & Aging Project
Alzheimer's Disease Research Center
Department of Neurology
Washington University School of Medicine
4488 Forest Park Avenue, Suite 101
St. Louis, MO 63108-2293

Phone: (314) 286-2683
Fax: (314) 286-2448
<http://alzheimer.wustl.edu>

MEMORY
MEMORY
MEMORY
MEMORY
MEMORY
MEMORY
MEMORY
& AGING
PROJECT

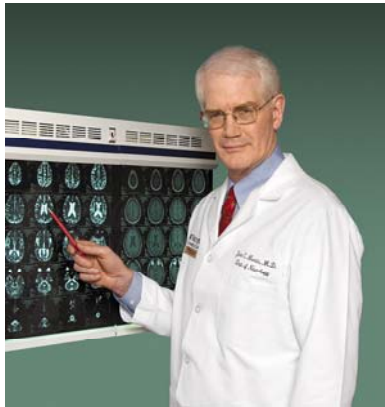
Washington University
School of Medicine &
Barnes-Jewish Hospital

St. Louis, Missouri

Our Staff

The Memory & Aging Project (MAP) is a multidisciplinary effort that includes the participation of neurologists, psychiatrists, geriatricians, psychologists, clinical nurse specialists, educational specialists, social workers and biostatisticians. Our staff includes psychometricians, computer programmers, medical technicians, data analysts, secretaries, and interviewers. Medical students and other trainees often observe for learning purposes.

John C. Morris, MD, Director of the Memory & Aging Project and the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, reviews MRI scans of a research volunteer.



Volunteering for the MAP

Healthy individuals and those with more than usual memory loss participate in various tests that measure different aspects of cognitive functioning. Inclusion in the study is based on strict research criteria and is determined by a physician. Participation is completely voluntary and free of any monetary costs. We hope that all those who volunteer will remain involved in the study long-term. We encourage brain donations from each of our volunteers after death, because examination of brain tissue is essential for better understanding of memory functioning and the aging process.

Participation in the MAP

Participation in the MAP involves all of the following studies and tests:

Clinical Assessment — This interview-based assessment focuses on memory and physical health concerns, and requires co-participation of a family member or close friend (i.e., someone who knows the volunteer well). Both are interviewed about the volunteer's memory and health. The volunteer receives feedback at the end of this session. This clinical assessment visit lasts approximately 2.5 hours.

Blood Draw for Genetic Studies — Approximately 3 tablespoons of blood are drawn from a vein in the arm of the volunteer. Researchers hope to learn if certain differences in genes may be associated with clinical symptoms, response to medications, or brain changes at autopsy.

Psychometric Testing — The volunteer is given paper-and-pencil tests designed to measure different types of memory and other cognitive abilities (e.g., attention). This psychometric testing visit lasts approximately 2 hours.

Structural Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) — A research MRI is completed that focuses on measurements of various structures and regions of the brain involved in memory. The duration of the scan is 1 hour.

Lumbar Puncture (Spinal Tap) — A sample of 3 tablespoons of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) is collected from the lower back. A small blood sample is also obtained from a vein in the arm. This procedure is done by a trained neurologist. By testing the CSF, researchers hope to identify chemicals that may suggest increased risk for brain disease and/or may be useful in the diagnostic process. The visit lasts 2 hours.

Positron Emission Tomography (PET) — PET is a research brain scan which studies brain activity using a low level of radiation. A special compound called a "radio tracer" is injected in a vein and allows specialized pictures to be taken. PET scanning allows for the study of protein fragments that may accumulate in brain diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease. PET scanning takes 1.5 hours.

Additional tests, such as computerized testing of memory processing and functional MRI of the brain have been incorporated into the Project, but not all volunteers participate in these.

Clinical Drug Trials — Increasing emphasis is placed on evaluating drug therapies for memory disorders, and MAP volunteers are often invited to participate in clinical trials.

Our Mission

The MAP is a team of health professionals from multiple disciplines who together provide a high-quality, integrated approach to the clinical research assessment of cognitive function in aging and dementia. The project team deeply appreciates the participation of hundreds of volunteers in its various studies; without these participants, their families and care partners, the MAP could not function.

With this background, the mission of the Project is to:

1. Deliver the best possible research assessment of clinically relevant cognitive function in older adults.
2. Promote, design and implement clinical research studies on aging and dementia.
3. Educate health professionals, students, and the lay community with today's best information and tomorrow's advances when achieved.



MAP physician, Monique Williams, MD, evaluates a research volunteer.

Future Goals

The Project focuses on studies of diagnosis, drug therapy, future course, and genetics of dementia. Since our inception, there has been substantial progress in understanding the problems of aging and dementias.

Research is being conducted across the country and world; there is great hope that through these pursuits the mysteries of memory loss will be unlocked.

For information and to volunteer for the Project, please call **314-286-2683** during normal business hours.

We are actively working towards the day when Alzheimer's disease becomes both a preventable and a curable illness.