The substantial clinical heterogeneity seen among patients with Alzheimer disease (AD) makes the associated differential diagnosis difficult, even for experienced clinicians. In addition to memory and learning impairment, an AD diagnosis requires demonstrated impairment in another cognitive domain, namely complex attention, executive function, language, perceptual-motor, and/or social cognition.1 Of these deficits, cognitive decline has the largest impact on day-to-day living.

It is essential that clinicians exclude alternative causes for changes in cognitive functioning, as the correct treatment plan for an individual depends on the underlying condition. Psychiatric disorders, such as depression and schizophrenia, can resemble dementia and can cause executive dysfunction or thought disorders. Medical issues such as thyroid disease and vitamin deficiencies can similarly mimic AD. Findings from comprehensive patient assessments and laboratory work can assist with the differential diagnosis.

Frontotemporal dementia, Parkinson disease, primary progressive aphasia, vascular dementia, dementia with Lewy bodies, and other dementias often present similarly to AD.

Relative to AD, frontotemporal dementia usually has a younger age at onset and causes personality changes and impulsive behaviors. Parkinsonian features, namely tremor and rigidity, accompany Parkinson disease, whereas a patient experiencing early language difficulties may be experiencing fluent or non-fluent primary progressive aphasia. Patients with a risk of vascular disease, a history of cerebrovascular disease, or vascular lesions present on a magnetic resonance imaging scan could have vascular dementia. Early visual hallucinations, fluctuating attention,
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1. Which of the following forms of dementia, relative to Alzheimer disease, has an earlier age at onset and causes personality changes and impulsivity?
   a. Frontotemporal dementia
   b. Lewy body dementia
   c. Vascular dementia
   d. Primary progressive aphasia

2. Which acronym, according to Dr Ellison, can be used to remember patient actions that can prevent or delay the development of Alzheimer disease?
   a. PRISMS
   b. DOCTORS
   c. DANCERS
   d. PRINCES

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