

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Alzheimers Disease: MENTALLY STIMULATING ACTIVITIES WARD OFF ALZHEIMERS DISEASE

A new study suggests there might indeed be some truth to the "use-it-or-lose-it" theory of cognitive health. This finding suggests activities programs in nursing facilities may be more important than anyone realized in staving off Alzheimers disease in elderly residents who are cognitively intact.

Scientists at the **Rush Alzheimers Disease Center and Rush-Presbyterian-St. Lukes Medical Center** in Chicago, followed over 700 dementia-free participants age 65 and older for an average of 4.5 years. Study participants were asked about time they typically spent in seven common activities that significantly involve information processing viewing television; listening to the radio; reading newspapers or magazines; reading books; playing games such as cards, checkers, crosswords or other puzzles; and going to museums.

In comparing the levels of cognitive activity with diagnosis of AD, the researchers found that the frequency of activity was related to the risk of developing AD. On average, compared with someone with the lowest activity level, the risk of disease was reduced by 47 percent among those whose frequency of activity was highest.

The study is reported in the Feb. 13 Journal of the American Medical Association.