

Transcription of Episode 346:

Alzheimer's Association

SPEAKERS

Kimberly Spiegel, Bob Firing, Jane Bark

Note: This transcription was computer-generated and may contain typographical errors.

Bob Firing 00:00

Good morning Shadow Hills! Well, they say the best case scenario for a young man or young woman is to become an old man or an old woman. And for those of us who are fortunate enough to make it through that, what's coming at the end, unfortunately, is Alzheimer's disease. We have two representatives from the Alzheimer's Association, who's going to talk to us today, one about covering what they're currently doing here at Shadow Hills, and then a way that you can help them do more. So the first person I'd like to introduce is Kimberly Spiegel. Kimberly, welcome.

Kimberly Spiegel 00:49

Oh, thank you. Thank you so much for having us today. Really appreciate it. My name is Kimberly Spiegel. And I'm the Senior Program and Operations Manager for the Alzheimer's Association. We're located in Palm Desert off of Alessandro and Portola, and we've been serving the Coachella Valley for over 25 years.

Bob Firing 01:08

And you recently had a lecture here?

Kimberly Spiegel 01:12

Yes, we did.

Bob Firing 01:13

Where there were 90 people who attended.

Kimberly Spiegel 01:16

That's true. We had a lecture on understanding Alzheimer's and dementia. And we had about 90 people attend, which is wonderful. So we were part of that lecture series, and we've been invited back to do a healthy living as well. Because Healthy Living is it's important to understand that our lifestyle has a huge component on ways to stave off this disease. So we're going to have that additional series coming up.

Bob Firing 01:42

Now, my understanding is that Alzheimer's affects about 50% of the population over the age of 85. Is that true?

Kimberly Spiegel 01:50

Yes, yes, it can.

Bob Firing 01:51

So this is a major factor in our future?

Bob Firing 01:55

I know that you have an ongoing support group here tell the audience about

Kimberly Spiegel 01:55

Right. The risk factor starts at the age of 65. So there's three risk factors: there's age, start, the clock starts ticking at 65. There's a deterministic gene risk. And that means that it's a gene for younger onset, meaning you're getting it in your 40s and 50s. And you know, you have that because your families, your family members, aunts, uncles, cousins, who have come down with it. And then the last is a risk factor gene. And so that risk factor gene is an APOE4 gene, you get either an APOE2, APOE3, or APOE4 from mom and dad. So you get one from each. And let's say if I got an APOE2 from my dad and a APOE4 from my mom, then I'm looking at those two particular genes and a APOE4 is that risk factor gene. However, APOE2 is kind of a protector gene. So it protects you from getting this disease. So the issue may be that it cancels each other out. And then I'm back in the same risk factor for aging.

Kimberly Spiegel 03:06

We do. We have a caregiver support group here we meet on the second and fourth Friday of every month, from 10:30 to 12 in the Capistrano room, and we've been doing that for a few years now. And it has been very, very successful when we started this, Desiree was working here in your fitness department. And we thought, well, let's give it a go and see what happens. Our very first meeting we had 24 People show. So we knew there was definitely an interest.

Bob Firing 03:37

And is this the kind of meeting where people who are intimately affected by it get to share their experiences and learn from each other.

Kimberly Spiegel 03:47

So yes, that is exactly it. A caregiver support group, we bring in resources and information, some education as well from our part, but bringing in the caregivers, it really you build that camaraderie because this is a very difficult and isolating journey. And you don't want to do this alone. So when we have a nice group, and we sit down and we talk, you're able to share what you're going through. And what you'd be amazed is other people in the room have already done that. Or at the same level you are at or maybe not quite there yet. But you're going to get the resources and information and maybe some of the other ways that people have tried. I call it "MacGyvering it" because some of the stuff that you do when you're caregiving is not necessarily in a textbook. So you learn from group some of the things that they've done and you mix a few things together and whatnot, you have something that works for you and your loved one.

Bob Firing 04:42

And there is support available for the people, right?

Kimberly Spiegel 04:46

Oh, yes.

Bob Firing 04:47

Caregiver support. Tell us about that.

Kimberly Spiegel 04:49

Okay, we do what's called a caregiver consultation. So it's a care consultation. It's private one on one time, where you would come in or I would come to you we would sit down On, and we would develop a plan of care, we would look at where you are in the journey where your loved one is in the journey, we would help you understand how to communicate with your doctor, help you learn how to communicate with your pharmacist, as well as managing behaviors, effective communication skills, we provide those as well, and helping the caregiver to be able to understand to step away, because what happens in caregiving is you end up and it becomes all consuming. And you isolate not on purpose, but because it's too difficult to get out. And then depression sets in, and the spiral just keeps going. So what we really try to do is encourage caregivers, they need to socialize, whether it's in a caregiver support group, or coming to other programming that we have, we have a lot of different types of programming, we have a lot of socialization programs, and where it's for both caregiver as well as person with disease.

Bob Firing 05:59

Is there, have there been any breakthroughs in the last few years? Are we making progress?

Kimberly Spiegel 06:05

Yes, we are. The Alzheimer's Association is the third largest funder for research. The first is the NIH, which is the National Institute of Health, and then the Chinese government, and then there's the Alzheimer's Association. So what we do is fund research throughout the world. And we've had some really good news coming through, there's some medications that are in the last leg, what we call it is in phase three, and we're seeing some amazing changes that are going to be coming helping it's part of its like, mess up the name like canonab. And it is something new, and it's quite lengthy to explain. But the best way to find that information in the easiest way for your reader or for your listeners is through our science hub app, we have an app that you can download, it's called the Alzheimer's Science Hub. And everything is in there.

Bob Firing 06:07

That's good to know, latest research people who are affected by this are highly motivated to research and find out and redevelop right that's going on.

Kimberly Spiegel 07:12

And lots of trials, we have a program also through the science hub, you can reach out to and through that hub or our website, which is www.alz.org. And look for trial match. And so we can connect you with

trials that are going on. There's not a lot unfortunately, here in the Coachella Valley. Most are in the LA area or Riverside. But most of the most of them pay for mileage.

Bob Firing 07:43

So and my understanding is that all of these services that you have described are available without charge. That is correct. The people involved.

Kimberly Spiegel 07:53

Everything we do is free of charge, everything from education, to our caregiver support groups, to our caregiver workshops, through our socialization programs, our care consultations, everything we do is free.

Bob Firing 08:08

Yeah. But of course, nothing comes for free. And so this is where I'd like to bring in Jane Bark, who can tell us about how this all gets paid for

Jane Bark 08:18

Yes. Thank you so much. And thank you again for having us to discuss this important topic. You're right. We have an Alzheimer's explorer group, for example, they take wonderful trips with the person who has Alzheimer's in their caregiver loved one. They've gone to the Air Museum, they've gone to the tram, they're going to Sunnylands next month, and it's a wonderful opportunity, um, in addition to the support group to have that person participate, it is at no cost, as is everything that we offer. And how do we afford that we have a wonderful Walk to End Alzheimer's that's going to be coming up. It's an annual event, this year is going to be in person at the Palm Desert Civic Center Park on October 29 on Saturday, so it's coming up. And it's our greatest fundraising event in the valley so that we can continue all these wonderful programs.

Bob Firing 09:13

Are there general things that people can keep in mind and do to try to prevent Alzheimer's disease?

Kimberly Spiegel 09:21

Yes, there are actually five things that you can do to help you hold on to cognition longer as we age.

Kimberly Spiegel 09:28

Those five things, the number one is socialization, staying engaged in your community. Staying engaged in people around you is very important because when we are socializing, our brain has to engage. Otherwise our brain stays in rote memory for most of the day. If you think about it, how often do you really have to pull that down? But when you socialize? You do have to because I don't know what you're going to say and you don't know what I'm going to say.

Kimberly Spiegel 09:54

Next is cognitive stimulation, taking something you already know and kicking it up a notch. So if you're in a sport or an activity club here, try something new, or take something that you're doing and perfect it a little bit more.

Kimberly Spiegel 10:09

The next is exercise, getting your heart rate up. That is key, because every time our heart beats, 25% of our blood volume goes to our brain, bringing it the two things that needs to survive, which is oxygen and glucose.

Kimberly Spiegel 10:23

And then diet and nutrition, junk in junk out. So sticking to a healthier choice, limiting any kind of processed foods, something like a Mediterranean diet is a great idea, we'll also get a glass of red wine, that's always good, too.

Kimberly Spiegel 10:38

And last but not least, is sleep. Hitting deep sleep is so important because it's when we hit deep sleep, I like to call them the brain janitors, but it's really hard spinal fluid. When we hit deep sleep, our brain expands the capacity in our brain expands spinal fluid goes up into the brain, washes it out, gets rid of all the junk fixes what needs to be fixed, and then it comes back down. And the reason why I say brain janitors is because if you don't, if you don't hit deep sleep and you're struggling, and you're having a hard time recalling things, and just you're just off step a little bit, it's because you've got all those garbage bags up in there, because you have not hit deep sleep. So it is very important.

Kimberly Spiegel 11:20

Diet and exercise. I think I mentioned, exercise is very important. And one of the ways that you can get some additional exercise is join us for our walk on October 29. You know, that's a what two hours Jane? Is that correct? Yeah, or two miles, is a lot of fun. Yeah. And it's slow pace. But you can get your heart rate up there and you can socialize, you can learn something new cognitive, then you can at least four of those five, while you come out.

Kimberly Spiegel 11:49

There is one thing I did forget to mention, that is really critical. We do have a 24/7 helpline. So a caregiver at two o'clock in the morning where they're at their wit's end and not sure what to do, they can pick up the phone and call our 24/7 helpline. It's an 800 number easy to reach 800-272-3900. And there will be somebody on the other line to be able to help them. And if they need more detailed we have master's level clinicians who can help as well.

Bob Firing 12:19

Yeah. Okay, well, thank you for coming. And this is something that affects everybody in the community. If you are affected by Alzheimer's, there's a support group, please help. Yes, not affected by Alzheimer's, you can write a check, you can help the people who are and you need both

Kimberly Spiegel 12:40

You do and your friends, for caregivers, if you know someone who's maybe caregiving for somebody with this disease, or your neighbor, you've were in groups with them before maybe some social groups reach out, they may not want to say to you that I'm caregiving for somebody with Alzheimer's, but you know, reach out and see if there's a way that you can help your neighbor, your friend. And if they can't

make it to the support group, please, you can, you can come and get the information and share it with them. So we would love to see more people attend our caregiver support group here.

Jane Bark 13:18

Our offices are always open, we do have people who walk in and say my spouse was just diagnosed, can you help me and we do. It happens daily. Phone calls, also to our, in addition to the 800 number, to our office, they also check in with us. So we would love to see a team start for the walk, who would be terrific. And it's a wonderful, upbeat, happy event that I'm sure everybody would enjoy. And it is a treasure trove of research because we have so many booths where they can find out if they're not in that situation now in the future to see what is available.

Bob Firing 13:57

That's a wonderful idea. I had Jane speak to a rotary club here recently and they've been motivated to start a team. And so hopefully, this will motivate our residents to start. We just did Paint El Paseo Pink not too long ago. And this would be another wonderful thing to do also.

Kimberly Spiegel 14:22

A few years ago prior to COVID. We had a wonderful team here

Bob Firing 14:27

I remember I was part of that.

Kimberly Spiegel 14:30

You were? Oh, thank you for joining us.

Bob Firing 14:33

Okay, Shadow Hills. Ladies, thank you for coming.

Kimberly Spiegel 14:37

Thank you.

Jane Bark 14:37

Thank you.

Bob Firing 14:38

Until next time, bye-bye.