Pick's Disease

Pick's disease is a form of dementia. It causes a slow progressive deterioration of social skills and changes in personality, along with impairment of intellect, memory, and language. Patients typically have atrophy of the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain. Some nerve cells have characteristic abnormalities when viewed under a microscope.

CAUSES

The cause of the disease is unknown.

SYMPTOMS

The disease varies greatly in the way it affects individuals. But there is a common core of symptoms among patients which may be present at different stages of the disease. These symptoms include:

- Loss of memory.
- Lack of spontaneity.
- Difficulty in thinking or concentrating.
- Disturbances of speech.

Other symptoms include:

- Gradual emotional dullness.
- Loss of moral judgment.
- Progressive dementia.

The disease usually affects individuals between the ages of 40 and 60. But the age of onset may range from 20 to 80.

TREATMENT

There is no cure or specific treatment for Pick's disease. Its progression cannot be slowed. But some of the symptoms of the disease may be treated effectively.

The course of Pick's disease is a progressive deterioration. The length of progression varies. It ranges from less than 2 years in some to more than 10 years in others. Death is usually caused by infection.

RESEARCH BEING DONE

The NINDS conducts and supports research to learn more about the cause, prevention, and treatment of dementing disorders such as Pick's disease. NINDS investigators are currently conducting a pathogenetic study of Pick's disease patients. The study includes:

- Cerebral imaging with positron emission tomography.
- Experimental therapeutic interventions.

The National Institute on Aging also conducts research relevant to Pick's disease.

Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.

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