

# Brain aging expert challenges the existence of Alzheimer's as a 'disease'

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Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine professor of neurology, Peter Whitehouse, M.D., Ph.D., challenges conventional wisdom and assumptions of brain aging in his new book, “The Myth of Alzheimer’s: What You Aren’t Being Told About Today’s Most Dreaded Disease.”

In his provocative and ground-breaking new book, Dr. Whitehouse questions current approaches to Alzheimer’s disease (AD) diagnosis and treatment and brings a new understanding to everything we thought we knew about brain aging. Dr. Whitehouse and co-author Daniel George, M. Sc., published “The Myth of Alzheimer’s” to expose what they believe to be the unsound clinical, political, and scientific framework of AD and explain why it continues to be so difficult to address a condition concerning so many people as they age.

According to the founder of the University Memory and Aging Center at Case Western Reserve University and University Hospitals Case Medical Center, “AD cannot be biologically or clinically differentiated from normal aging. There is no one profile of AD that is consistent from person to person,” says Dr. Whitehouse. “Alzheimer’s is a heterogeneous process because it reflects the different way people’s brains age over their lifetimes.” The book claims AD represents our culture’s attempt to make sense of a natural process of brain aging that we cannot control; all the biological hallmarks of AD are also the hallmarks of normal, albeit severe, forms of brain aging. “The promise of a panacea for one of our most dreaded ‘diseases’ is a powerful cultural myth,” says Whitehouse,

“and one purveyed by powerful pharmaceutical companies, advocacy organizations, and private researchers with much profit to gain.” The book points out that most scientists in the field of AD research believe a cure is unlikely and we need to invest our dollars more wisely by putting them toward prevention and care rather than predominantly in a cure.

Based on twenty-five years as a clinician and educator caring for persons with aging associated cognitive challenges and on his experience as the co-founder (with his wife Catherine) of an internationally recognized and nationally awarding winning intergenerational school affiliated with Case Western Reserve, Dr. Whitehouse shares his experiences and accumulated wisdom about ageing well.

The term “Alzheimer’s disease” generates fear, paranoia, angst, and stigmatization while evoking powerful social and emotional images. For the millions of people diagnosed with AD and their families, this book will help them understand why what they have been told may be incomplete, even wrong; why the treatment they are probably being given is inadequate; and most importantly, how they can get the help they need. “The Myth of Alzheimer’s” encourages readers to think about brain aging not as a disease, but as a lifelong process fraught with challenges which will change society’s whole approach to aging and add quality to our later years and to the lives of those we love.

With a caring, yet scientifically grounded, message of prevention, Whitehouse and George explore measures to enhance the likelihood of successful cognitive aging, and presents examples of how to maintain cognitive vitality and a sense of fulfillment and social contribution as we age. Deemed a “landmark book” by Harry Moody of the AARP, “The Myth of Alzheimer’s” provides answers for when to see a doctor for memory loss, how to find the right medical team, and how to develop a collaborative relationship with your physician.

Backed up by extensive research, full of practical advice and information, and infused with hope, Dr. Whitehouse and Mr. George's book strives to liberate people from the crippling label of AD and teach them how to best approach memory loss and learn how to age with wisdom, while preserving their quality of life.

"The Myth of Alzheimer's" answers important questions such as:

- Is Alzheimer's actually a disease?
- What is the difference between a naturally aging brain and an Alzheimer's brain?
- How effective are the current drugs for AD" Are they worth the money we spend on them?
- What kind of hope does science really have for the treatment of memory loss" Are there alternative interventions that can keep our aging bodies and minds sharp?
- What promise does genetic research actually hold?
- What would a world without Alzheimer's look like and how do we as individuals and as human communities get there?

Source: Case Western Reserve University

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