Alzheimer’s Disease Diagnosis Patient Journey

Alzheimer’s disease (AD), the most common cause of dementia, progresses clinically over one to two decades. The accumulation of amyloid and tau proteins in the brain, two pathological hallmarks of disease, can happen 10-20 years before the onset of memory decline and other symptoms.1

Despite this evidence, more than half of patients with dementia have never been formally diagnosed.2 Even once patients notice the early signs of cognitive impairment, a diagnosis can take two years or longer.3

What is Cognitive Impairment?
Cognitive impairment is when a person has trouble remembering, learning new things, concentrating, or making decisions that affect their everyday life.4 Cognitive assessment involves asking various types of questions and assessing a patient’s memory, orientation, and awareness.5

What is Dementia?
Dementia is a general term for loss of memory, language, problem-solving and other thinking abilities that are severe enough to interfere with daily life.6 Dementia is a generic term to describe a variety of different diseases affecting the brain, including Alzheimer’s disease.7 Alzheimer’s disease accounts for 60% to 80% of cases.6

BIOMARKER TESTS

A test that measures levels of amyloid protein buildup, a sign of AD.8

BLOOD-BASED BIOMARKER TESTS

A biomarker that identifies the presence of abnormal protein in the blood.9 Potentially offers a faster, less invasive and cost-effective method to identify the presence or absence of biomarkers to aid in the diagnosis of the disease.10

CEREBROSPINAL FLUID (CSF) TESTS

A test that measures levels of amyloid protein buildup, a sign of AD.11

BIOMARKER-DRIVEN DIAGNOSTICS

After a cognitive assessment, biomarker diagnostics can be used to detect key signs of disease and aid in the confirmation of AD pathology including:

What is a Biomarker?
A biomarker is an objective medical sign used to measure the presence or absence of disease.

The Typical Diagnosis Journey
While every diagnosis journey is different, patients currently tend to go through the following steps:

STEP 1
Cognitive assessment including a comprehensive evaluation by a specialist. Further cognitive, physical, and behavioral testing will take place as well as a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan to test for other causes of dementia and potential diagnoses.

STEP 2
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CLINICAL ASSESSMENT AND PATHOLOGICAL CONFIRMATION of AD are important because they may lead a patient to initiate informed disease management at an earlier stage and allow for earlier consideration of available treatment options to slow disease progression.12

References: