

“Healthy living activities are key in keeping the brain as sharp as possible.”

Dr. Nathaniel Chin

UW Health memory clinic doctor and medical director of the Healthy Living with MCI Series

Inception of the Healthy Living Program with MCI

A diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment (MCI) is overwhelming for all families. MCI is characterized by problems with memory, language, thinking or judgment. Dr. Nathaniel Chin is the medical director for the “Healthy Living with Mild Cognitive Impairment” quarterly series at the Wisconsin Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center. “The Healthy Living Series came to be as we were searching for a way to connect and empower individuals who have MCI,” Dr. Chin said. “Healthy living activities are key in keeping the brain as sharp as possible. This program helps people discover that they can continue to live well, in spite of MCI, and the topics we cover can play a huge role in how people navigate disease progression.”



Topics are based on cognitive resilience and include areas such as sleep, nutrition, exercise, social engagement, stress/cognition and legal/financial planning. “Our brains can be resistant to some things,” Dr. Chin said. “Resilience is key.” The series is co-sponsored by the Alzheimer’s Association Wisconsin Chapter. To find out more about the series, visit: www.adrc.wisc.edu/healthy-living-mild-cognitive-impairment. Dr. Chin is also a member of the Alzheimer’s Association Board of Directors and the Medical/Scientific Committee.

Critical Role of Stabilizing or Slowing Change in the Brain

“There are things you can do for the brain to help improve function when living with MCI,” Dr. Chin shared. “It all relies on people living a healthy life. People with MCI often focus on the doom and gloom of dementia. But with MCI, there are many things you can do to impact progression. Everyone won’t progress to dementia, but getting better or staying stable doesn’t happen on its own – you need to act.”

“There are many causes of MCI,” Dr. Chin said. “We believe that by addressing other factors, we can stabilize or slow the change in the brain, leading to a better quality of life. We want to empower people to do absolutely everything they can to stave off what can eventually happen or reduce impact.”

A Personal Calling to Geriatric Care

Dr. Chin entered the medical profession with plans to focus on infectious disease. But after medical school his father was diagnosed with early-stage Alzheimer’s and it changed everything for his family. “We moved from San Diego to Wisconsin to help my mom care for my father,” Dr. Chin said. “I’m grateful for the two years we were able to help support him before he passed away in 2018.”

“After my dad was diagnosed, I realized I didn’t know anything about Alzheimer’s,” Chin said. “I had to learn to be a secondary caregiver to support my mom. That’s what really brought me to geriatrics and memory care. Also, as the child of someone who had Alzheimer’s, you automatically think of what that will mean for your future. The area that matters most to me, with my family history, is to focus on what can be done to prevent or delay the onset of dementia. I want to invest in my own health and keeping my brain active and healthy. I share this same advice with patients and the children of patients.”