

First Link Connection Video Transcript - Part 2

Now, let's talk about the brain of a person who is living with dementia and consider once again the idea that the brain can be represented as a highway system.

In this situation there is an eighteen wheel truck carrying a big load of boxes traveling down the highway to short term memory. This is where we first begin to see glitches in the memory. Think about that smooth solid highway. At some point a large crack has developed causing the truck to drop a couple of boxes off the truck. Eventually that crack develops into a large gap leaving all those boxes behind. The solid highway to short term memory is gone. This is when carers may need to develop strategies to compensate and more effectively communicate with persons living with dementia.

It is important to note that treatments such as Reminyl, Exelon, Aricept, Donepezil and Ebixaact act like a snow plow or a grader, pushing the boxes off the road, keeping the road clear. Although there is no cure for the disease, these treatments may reduce the symptoms.

However, as time goes on, boxes continue to fall along the highway and even the snowplows can't keep it clear.

Boxes build up first on the road to the short term memory. The road eventually becomes blocked and the courier will no longer be able to retrieve the information required. This is what is happening when a person with dementia says "I don't know" or "I can't remember"

By comparison, when boxes start falling in long term memory, the boxes will fall in front of the most recent memories first. In this case, they will fall in front of the 2020 filing cabinet, meaning someone with dementia will struggle with the most recent long term memory files first. They might not recall who visited last summer. As the disease progresses and more boxes start to fall, then getting information from the 2000's, 90's, 80's, etc... will be a struggle.

We should also point out that the road to short term memory does not fill up with boxes before they also start to fall elsewhere. In order to get a diagnosis of dementia the boxes must fall in at

least two areas of the brain. We are going to discuss some of these areas now. This is not necessarily the order that the disease progresses, everyone experiences the disease differently.