

Routine Screening for Mild Cognitive Impairment

Recommendations from the State Plan for Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias in Maine, 2012.

- *“Have you noticed any changes in your (or in your parent’s) memory recently?”*

- *“Are you (or is your parent) less well organized than in the past?”*

Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) is the clinical term delineating the transition from normal cognition to dementia, which designates a level of severity that causes significant impairment in social or occupational functioning and represents a significant decline from a previous level of functioning. It is a pathological state that represents the earliest signs of a neurodegenerative disorder.

Most standardized office assessments of cognition are designed to diagnose dementia and not sensitive enough to confidently detect MCI. However, the symptoms of MCI, such as trouble with memory, are quite apparent to patients and their family members. Thus a simple screening question such as *“Have you noticed any changes in your (or in your parent’s) memory recently?”* actually offers value in identifying individuals at risk.

Furthermore, executive cognition can decline while memory is spared. Thus a second screening question such as *“Are you (or is your parent) less well organized than in the past?”* can help identify possible incipient executive cognitive decline.

We propose that all Mainers 65 and older are asked these questions once yearly. Individuals answering in the affirmative should be followed more closely for progression of memory or any other mild cognitive symptom.