Frontotemporal Dementia

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)

Source

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). Frontotemporal Dementia Information Page.

Frontotemporal dementia (FTD) describes a clinical syndrome associated with shrinking of the frontal and temporal anterior lobes of the brain. Originally known as Pick's disease, the name and classification of FTD has been a topic of discussion for over a century. The current designation of the syndrome groups together Pick's disease, primary progressive aphasia, and semantic dementia as FTD. Some doctors propose adding corticobasal degeneration and progressive supranuclear palsy to FTD and calling the group Pick Complex. These designations will continue to be debated. As it is defined today, the symptoms of FTD fall into two clinical patterns that involve either (1) changes in behavior, or (2) problems with language. The first type features behavior that can be either impulsive (disinhibited) or bored and listless (apathetic) and includes inappropriate social behavior; lack of social tact; lack of empathy; distractability; loss of insight into the behaviors of oneself and others; an increased interest in sex; changes in food preferences; agitation or, conversely, blunted emotions; neglect of personal hygiene; repetitive or compulsive behavior, and decreased energy and motivation. The second type primarily features symptoms of language disturbance, including difficulty making or understanding speech, often in conjunction with the behavioral type's symptoms. Spatial skills and memory remain intact. There is a strong genetic component to the disease; FTD often runs in families.