

Technology for Everyone Group Meeting, 3rd October 2017

Helen Griffiths gave a talk '*Dementia - not just memory problems*'.

Dementia is defined by changes in the brain, of several different types, causing different problems with cognitive functions - not just with memory, although this is very common. We all forget 'what we went into the spare bedroom for', but if memory lapses are frequent and cause problems they need investigating.

Patients are usually seen by a psychiatrist and then by a neuropsychiatrist such as Helen. This is to diagnose and sort out the different types of dementia which need different sorts of treatments.

Alzheimer's, where the temporal lobes of the brain shrink, is only the most common type. Helen showed slides of a patient's brain in successive years, showing the shrinkage which produces lack of cognitive functions such as language or memory. Other types are vascular dementia and Parkinson's type diseases and posterior cortex atrophy with lack of spatial judgement and other cognitive functions.

Appropriate treatments can slow the processes, such as by increasing blood supply where it is deficient. Some falls can be avoided and simple help of many kinds can improve life.

Helen recommended the following to all of us:

- Anything to increase blood supply - such as brisk walking

- Eat fresh fruit and veg, particularly 'colourful' ones, a Mediterranean type diet with less dairy fat and less meat

- Keep intellectually busy (such as being here!)

- Be careful about weight

- Don't smoke.

A discussion followed. The different types of dementia may be caused by trauma, not age. All sensory experiences are perceived by organs and then processed by the brain before we 'experience' them and so are affected by practice and by general health or tiredness, as well as by any dementia.