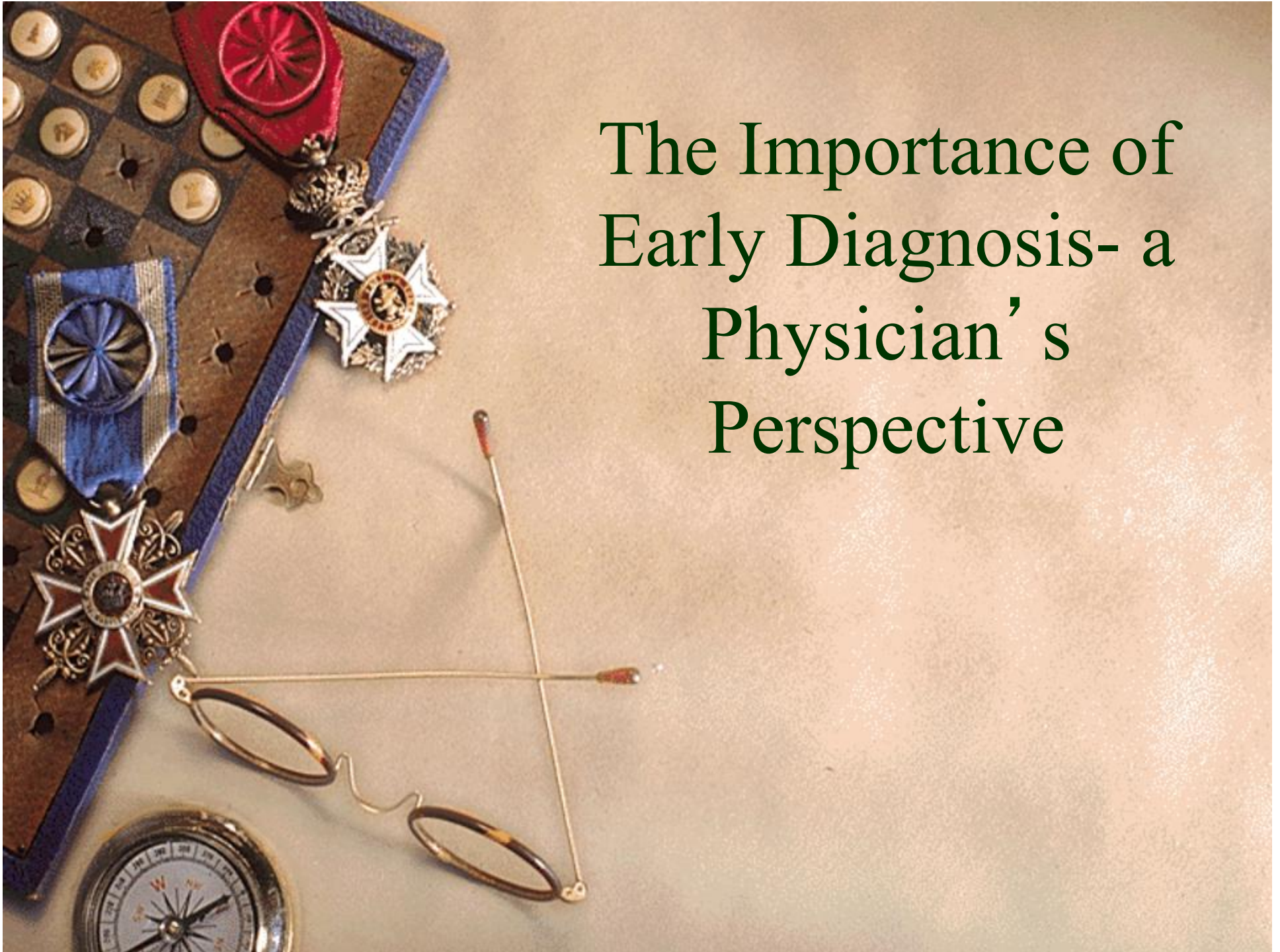


The Importance of Early Diagnosis- a Physician's Perspective





Your thoughts?

- ◆ You are 77 years old, living with your spouse and busy with volunteering, cycling, and walking your dog etc...



Which would you prefer to be told?


- ◆ That you have MCI
- ◆ Nothing until you have dementia



More of your thoughts

Which of the following would be the most important benefit for YOU of early diagnosis?

- ◆ time to prepare legal documents
- ◆ time to sort out relationships
- ◆ time to try drug treatment
- ◆ time to worry about dementia



What is early diagnosis and why is it not always easy?

- ◆ Dementia has long prodrome
- ◆ MCI versus dementia
- ◆ Screening test scores versus functional concerns
- ◆ “push back” from patients or family
- ◆ Concurrent illness

How have things changed since
I was a kid??



What ASC found

- ◆ 44% waited more than a year from the first signs of dementia in a family member before seeing a health care professional
 - 16% waited more than two years
- ◆ Nearly 40% were unaware of benefits of early diagnosis when their family member first started exhibiting signs of the disease.






What else did caregivers say?

- ◆ 22% didn't know early diagnosis gives the person with dementia time to put their legal and financial affairs in order.
- ◆ 38% didn't realize early diagnosis gives the person with dementia and their family time to learn the skills needed to cope.
- ◆ Only about half of respondents said they were referred for counselling and support.



What did they perceive as the advantages?

- ◆ 78% “Putting their financial and legal matters in order.”
- ◆ 69% “Keeping the person with the disease at home longer.”
- ◆ 69% “Involving the person with the disease in key decision-making about their future needs and care.”
- ◆ 62% “Learning to better cope with the disease.”



Should the truth always be
told??

Dementia versus Cancer ???



If you are a health professional; have you ever avoided telling someone about the presence of cognitive impairment?

If so (most of us), why was that the case?



What are the downsides?

- ◆ Suicide concerns and facts
 - There appears to be increased risk of suicide with early diagnosis
 - Highest risk soon after diagnosis
- ◆ “Lack of options at time of diagnosis”
- ◆ Family conflict

How to go about it and- what not to do


- ◆ Don't paint a worst case scenario
- ◆ Use the "D" word
- ◆ Emphasize what can be done as well as what can't be done
- ◆ Be there





What are the barriers to sharing the diagnosis

- ◆ Missing the diagnosis
 - Misdiagnosis
 - Under recognition
 - Challenges of corroborating history
- ◆ Aging versus dementia
- ◆ Medical co-morbidities
 - ??causing the cognition changes
 - One more thing to add to the list of health problems



The role of physician when treatment options are limited ?

- ◆ Placebo groups in dementia studies tend to do better with supports
- ◆ Appropriate referral to community resources
- ◆ Education and information
- ◆ Response to medical issues and dementia urgencies
- ◆ Management of safety issues
- ◆ Support and availability

Now, over to Bob

