

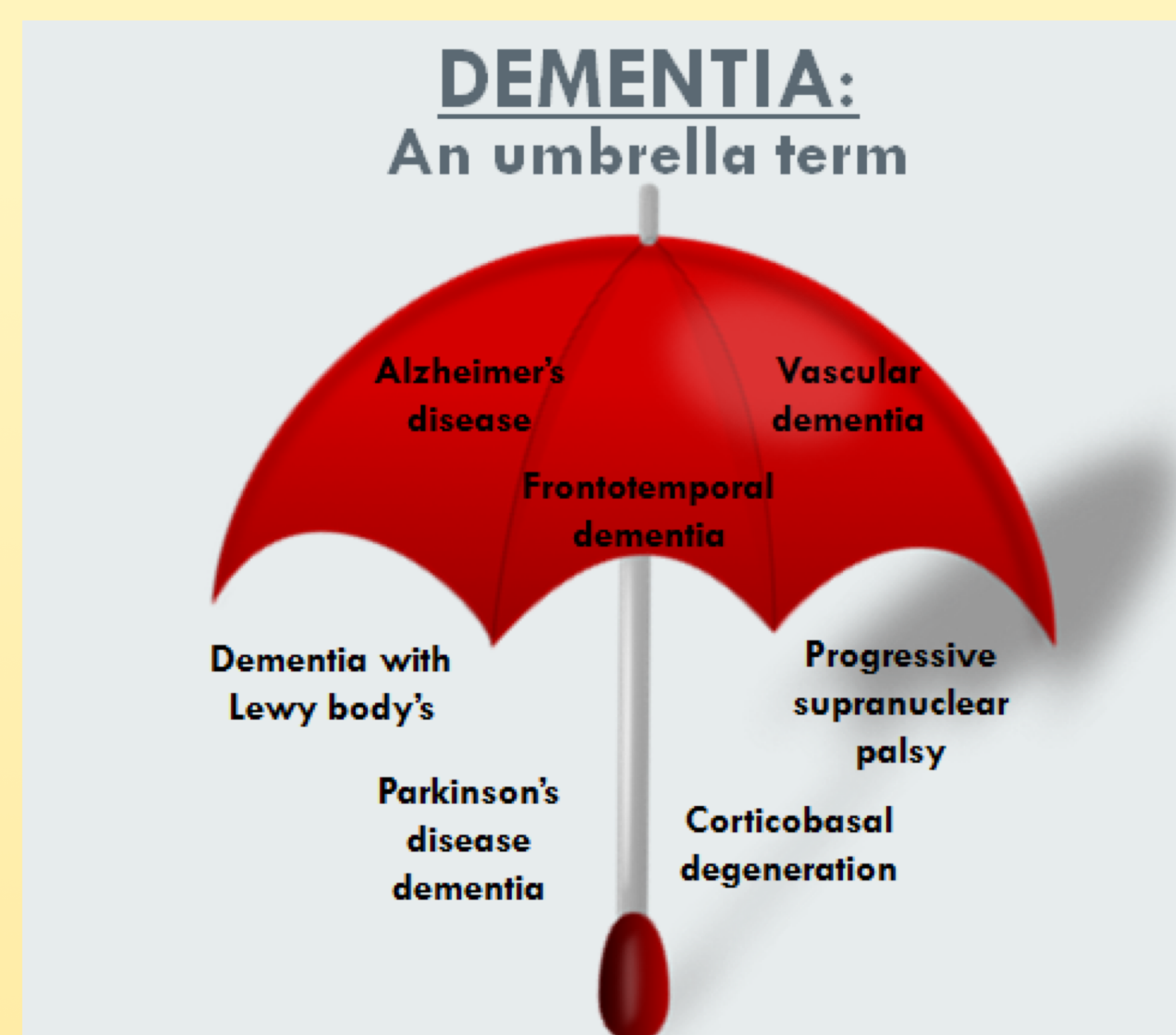
# Students' Knowledge of Alzheimer's Disease



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## BACKGROUND

Alzheimer's disease (AD), a form of dementia, is an irreversible, regressive brain disease preventing one's ability to process, recall, and retain information. As the aging adult population increases, the topic of AD and dementia is rapidly procuring national health interest. Globally there are approximately 50 million people diagnosed with dementia related illnesses, with nearly 10 million new cases diagnosed each year (World Health Organization [WHO], 2019). At present, it is estimated that 5.8 million Americans of all ages are living with AD, 5.6 million who are 65 years or older (Alzheimer's Association, 2019). Within the United States (U.S), "the most recent Global Burden of Disease classification system" confirms that over the course of 26 years, from 1990 to 2016, AD has escalated from the 12th to the sixth most arduous diseases, which are those associated with disability, or loss of one's healthy life (Alzheimer's Association, 2019, p. 29).

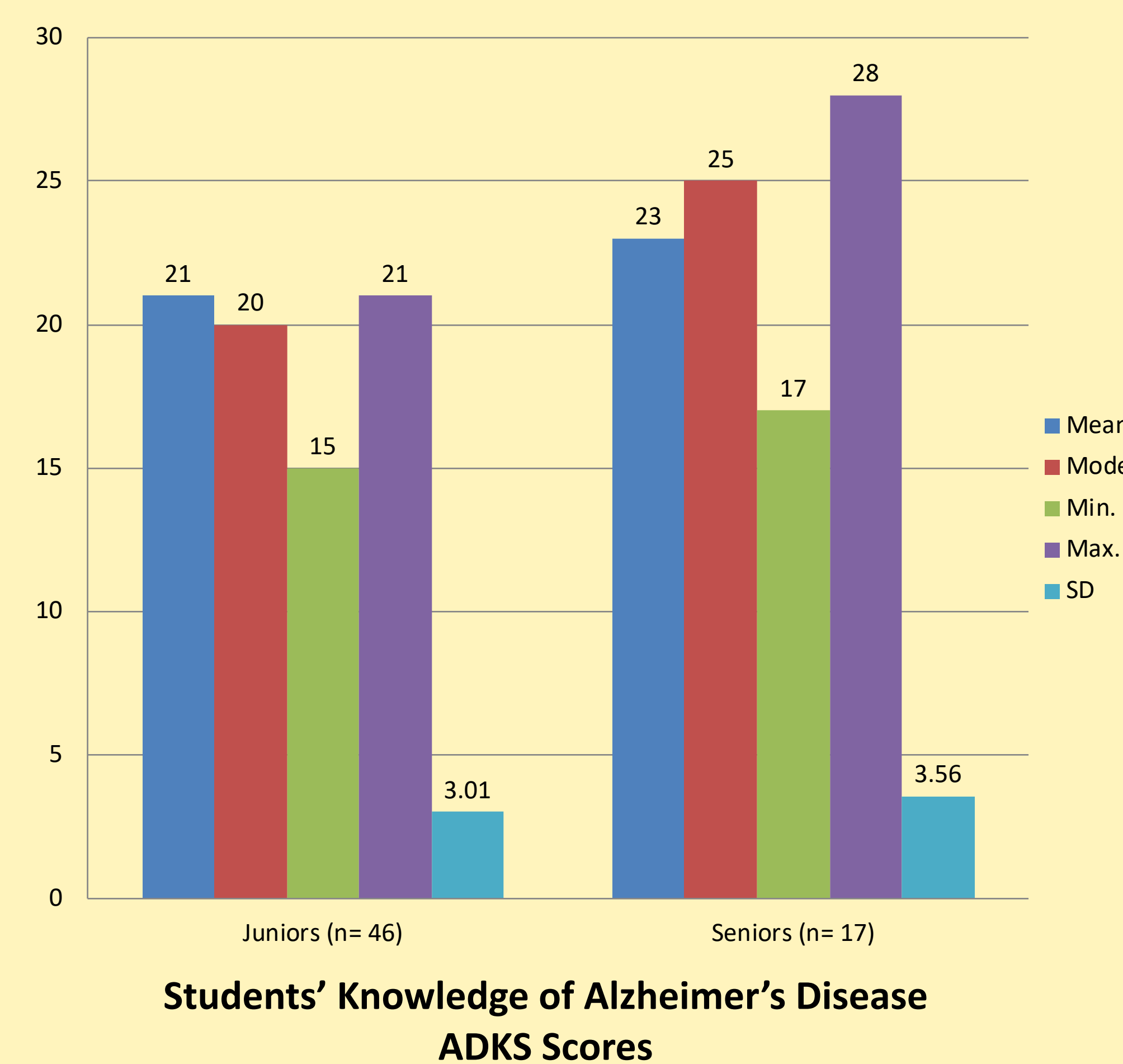


## PURPOSE

The purpose of this MSN Thesis was to assess nursing students' knowledge of Alzheimer's disease. According to Maharaj (2017), literature suggests that advances need to be made in nursing education to prepare future nurses with the ability to gain a better understanding of the inimitable needs of older adults, particularly those with AD and other related dementias (ORDs). Nurse educators and nursing students alike must remain cognizant of the aging population, especially the distinct needs of those who are memory impaired. It is imperative that nursing students receive adequate training and gain a complex understanding of how to properly care for aging adults, more explicitly, those enduring memory impairments. Likewise, educators and students must consider the various factors affecting one's awareness of dementia; factors include things such as displaying a positive approach, effectively communicating, and bestowing objective perceptions.

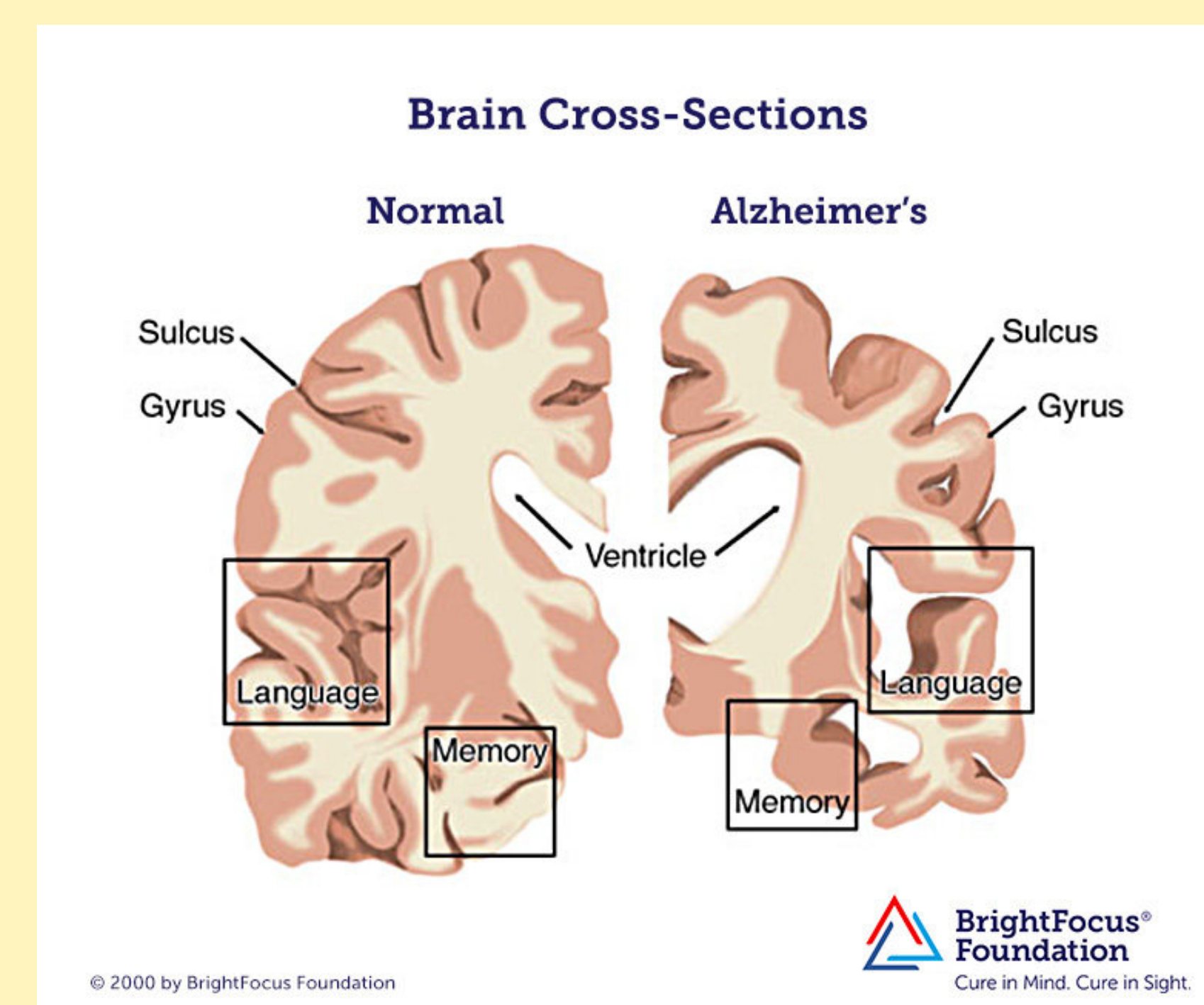
## DESIGN

A descriptive correlational design was used for this study with a purpose of determining the prevalence of AD knowledge among junior and senior level nursing students. A cross-sectional design was used to collect data using the Alzheimer's Disease Knowledge Scale (ADKS) (Carpenter, Balsis, Otilingam, Hanson, & Gatz, 2009).



## COLLECTION METHODS

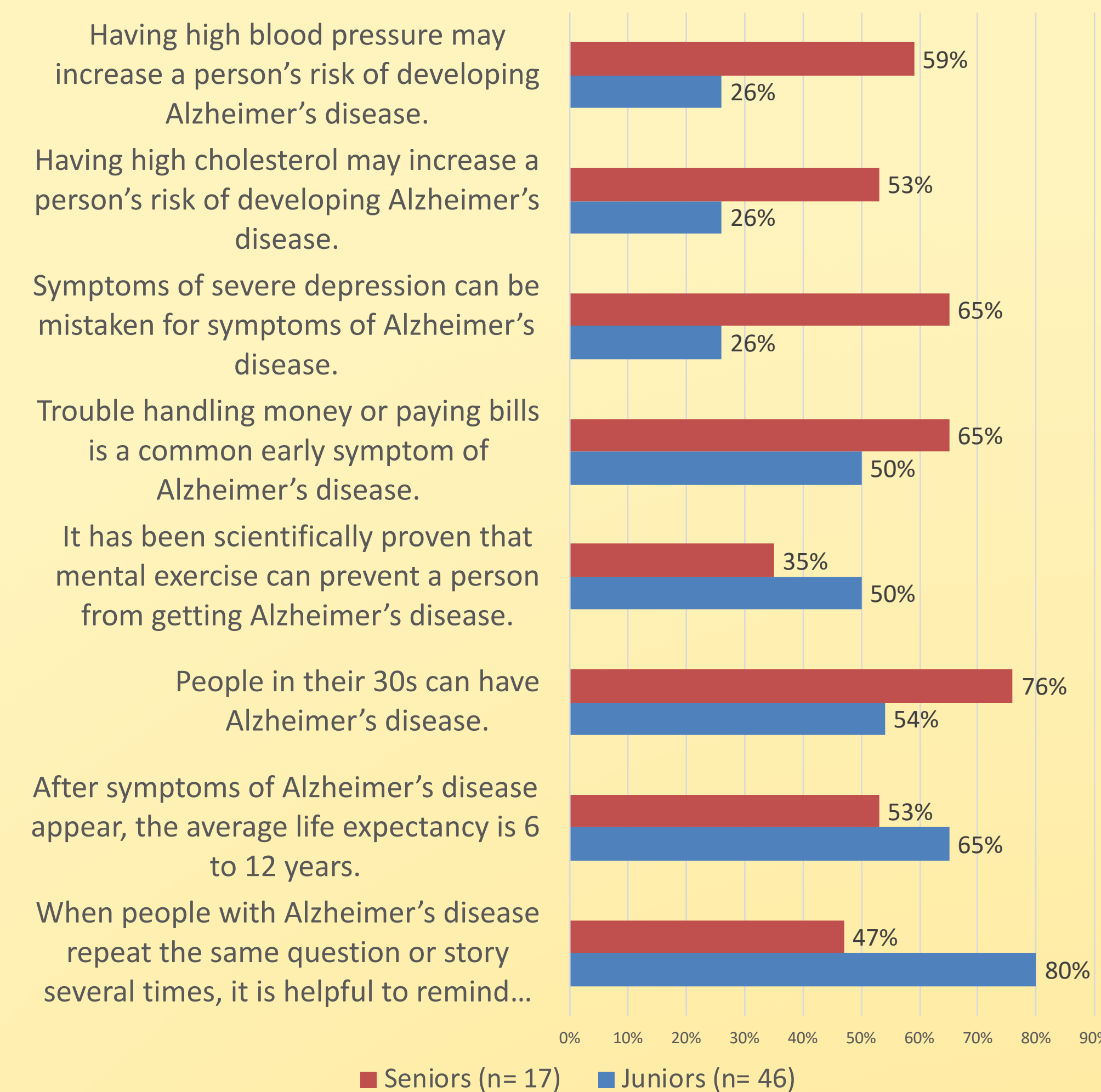
Data was collected in an academic setting using a convenience sample of junior and senior level student cohorts in the fall of 2019. The ADKS was administered to junior level students enrolled in an Adult I course and to senior level students enrolled in a Mental Health Nursing course. Out of the 67 students, juniors (n = 48) and seniors (n = 19), 63 students completed the ADKS.



## RESULTS

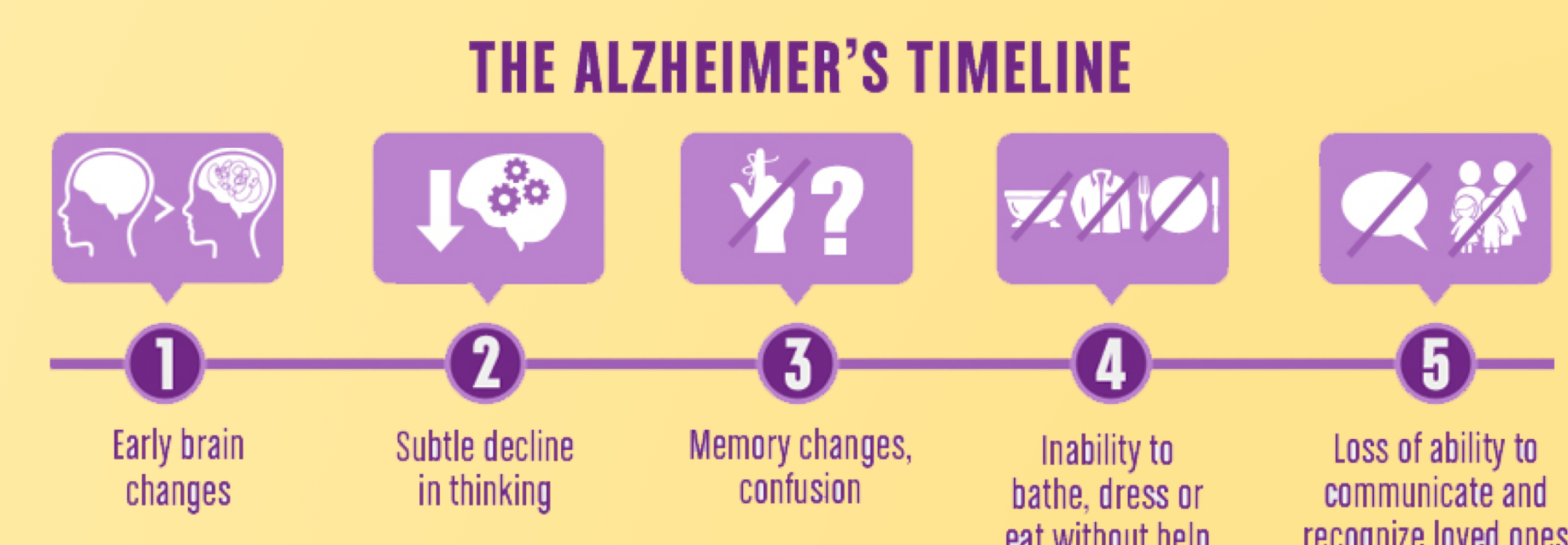
The ADKS was used to assess the general knowledge of AD among junior and senior level nursing students. Students' scores were calculated by tallying each of the 30 true or false answers; 30 being the maximum score possible indicating the level of knowledge of AD the student has attained. Students' ADKS scores revealed variations in levels of AD knowledge; group differences were expected. Results indicated that the prevalence of knowledge of Alzheimer's disease among nursing students is diverse.

### ADKS Questions in which Students were Least Knowledgeable



## INTERPRETATION

Differences in knowledge level between junior and senior students was found. Students' ADKS scores revealed variations in levels of AD knowledge; group differences were expected. Results indicated that the prevalence of knowledge of Alzheimer's disease among nursing students was diverse.



## CONCLUSION

A continued rise in patients with dementia-related illnesses reiterates that nurse educators will soon be confronted with the challenges of incorporating specific curriculum which addresses students' knowledge when caring for the older adult. In order to effectively address the needs of the increasing population of aging adults, it is imperative for nurse educators to understand the necessity of incorporating dementia specific content which places a unique emphasis on AD and ORDs. Improvement of student learning experiences which equip nursing students with the knowledge and skills needed to care for an ever-increasing aging population with AD and ORDs is vital.



## IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING

Caring for those with memory impairment requires concerted effort; therefore, it is essential that nurse educators be prepared to teach students the knowledge and skills needed to care for the ever-increasing population of aging adults. Assessing students' knowledge of dementia will allow researchers to discover the need for AD education, thus creating invaluable educational opportunities. These opportunities will allow educators to inform student nurses, those seeking to become professional nurses, how to properly address, approach, and care for those with dementia. Learning experiences will also help Students acquire coping skills to persevere through the challenges and stresses of caring for those who are memory impaired.



## REFERENCES

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