



What Is Anosogonia?

By Walter M. Bortz, II, MD

Periodically, my curiosity drives me to look up a word that is unfamiliar to me. Such was the case when I was doing rather random Internet roaming about Alzheimer's disease.

I stumbled over a blog about senior living written by Sarah Stevenson. Its title was *Anosogonia and Alzheimer's*.

Anosogonia was a foreign term to me so I took the next step and looked it up. Anosogonia means the lack of awareness of impairment. It is said that 80% of persons with Alzheimer's disease have it. Strokes are also a common precursor.

The condition poses severe management problems for the caregiver of the individual who lacks an awareness of the mental aberration in effect.

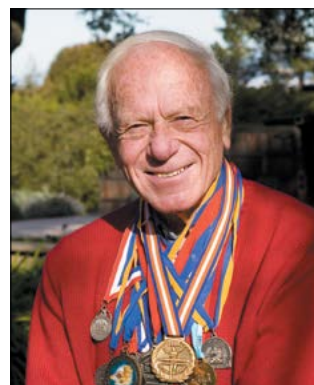
Individuals with it may also have other problems such as performing routine tasks, money management, inappropriate anger control and confabulation.

It's often impossible to get the person with this condition to acknowledge that they have a difficulty. It is critical to use positive approaches to communication. Being gentle and encouraging restructured scheduled tasks and personal care are important.

Responsibility should be minimized. Working together is critical and above all staying calm and focused.

The blog that I read recommended a book *"I'm Not Sick. I Don't Need Help"* by psychologist Xavier Amador, a professor at Columbia for helpful assistance.

Words matter a lot.



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