

Worksheet 13:

Lewy Body disease

Cause

Not known. Lewy Body disease is the third most common cause of dementia, representing approximately 4% of people with dementia in the UK. Lewy Bodies, named after the doctor who first identified them in 1912, are tiny, spherical protein deposits found in brain cells.

How it affects the brain

The presence of Lewy Bodies in the brain disrupts the brain's normal functioning. It also interrupts the action of important chemical messengers in the brain.

Risk factors

- Old age
- Genetic predisposition

Likely signs and symptoms

- Experiencing detailed and convincing visual and/or auditory hallucinations, often of people or animals
- Finding that abilities fluctuate daily, or even hourly, with moments of clarity
- Falling asleep very easily by day, and having restless, disturbed nights with confusion, nightmares and hallucinations
- Fainting or experiencing dizziness
- Elevated risk of falling
- Problems with attention and alertness
- Difficulty in planning ahead and co-ordinating mental activities
- Although memory is often affected, it is typically less so than in Alzheimer's disease
- Similar signs and symptoms to Parkinson's disease – including slowness, muscle stiffness, trembling of the limbs, a tendency to shuffle when walking, loss of facial expression, and changes in the strength and tone of the voice

What can be done to help?

- Some medications used in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease may help but caution is needed
- Some medications used in the treatment of Parkinson's disease may help – again, caution is needed
- Physiotherapy
- Exercise
- Adapting the environment to help people find their way and stay independent and safe
- Meaningful activity – helping the person to do all the things they enjoy or need to do