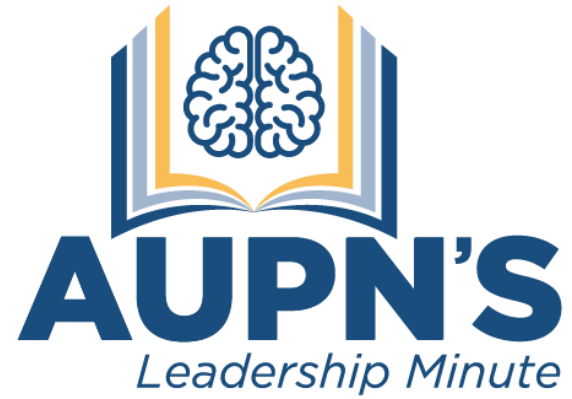




**Shreyas Gangadhara, MD**  
University of Mississippi  
Medical Center



*What is Brain Health &  
Why You Should Care  
About It!*



**Mitchell Elkind, MD, MS, FAHA**  
Chief Clinical Science Officer  
American Heart Association

## Leadership Minute Podcast Episode Description

The notion of brain health draws attention to the burden of brain disease; the fact that nearly half of brain disease is preventable; and that brain health can be improved through healthy diet, exercise and control of blood pressure, among other measures.

Research opportunities in brain health are growing, including from the American Heart Association.

# What Is Brain Health?

**Theoretically**, brain health can be defined as the optimal capacity to function adaptively in the environment. The main elements of doing so are thinking, moving, and feeling.

**Pathologically**, brain health can be thought of as an absence of any structural brain injury.

**Clinically**, one can think of brain health as the ability to function normally without clinical evidence of brain disease.

Gorelick P et al. Stroke. 2017;48:e284-e303.

Gorelick PB, Sorond FA. Cereb Circ Cogn Behav. 2023;6:100190.

Lazar RM, et al. Stroke. 2021;52:e295-e308.

# Why Should We Care About Brain Health?

**Practically**, the key question is what purpose can the concept of brain health serve?

Brain health can be quite broad, encompassing:

- Structural disorders of the brain

- Mental health disorders

- Systemic conditions with neurological consequences (e.g., thyroid disease or HIV)

- Developmental disorders

Most often, the concept of brain health provides opportunity to increase public awareness and professional education around cognitive aging and dementia.

# Why Should We Care About Brain Health?

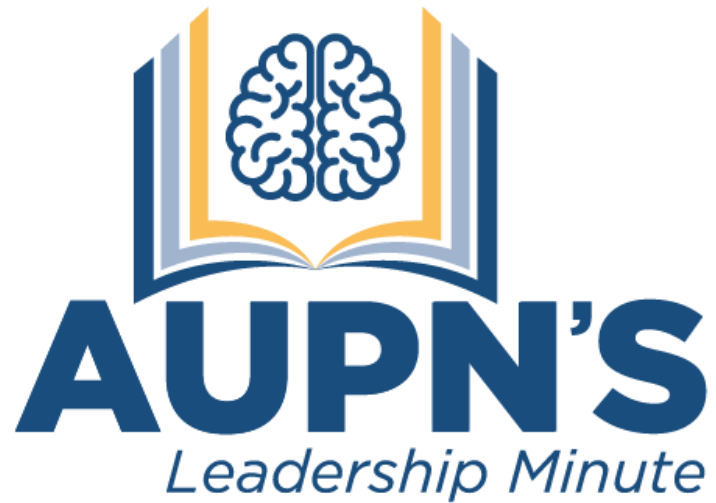
1. Burden of brain disorders is high: largest in terms of disability adjusted life years of any disease category.
2. Dementia as cause of death is growing faster than any other disease.
3. Neurodegenerative disorders are not inevitable, but preventable: 45% of risk of dementia preventable (Lancet Commission, 2024).
4. Risk factors for cognitive decline and dementia largely same as CVD.
5. These risk factors are risk factors not only for vascular causes of dementia, but for neurodegeneration, as well.

# Why Should We Care About Brain Health?

6. Relationship between heart health and brain health is bidirectional.
7. Brain health not only absence of disease, but also includes positive cognitive traits like creativity, adaptability, resilience, empathy, etc.
8. Interventions such as BP control and healthy diet can slow cognitive decline and dementia.
9. Our patients and the public are most concerned about dementia compared with other medical conditions.
10. The science of brain health is evolving: research opportunities through American Heart Association and other organizations.

# References

- Gorelick PB, Sorond FA. What is brain health? Cereb Circ Cogn Behav. 2023 Oct 25;6:100190.
- Gorelick PB, Furie KL, Iadecola C, et al. Defining Optimal Brain Health in Adults: A Presidential Advisory From the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association. Stroke. 2017;48:e284-e303.
- Lazar RM, Howard VJ, Kernan WN, et al. A Primary Care Agenda for Brain Health: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association. Stroke. 2021;52:e295-e308.
- Livingston G, Huntley J, Liu KY, et al. Dementia prevention, intervention, and care: 2024 report of the Lancet standing Commission. Lancet. 2024;404(10452):572-628.



AUPN's Leadership Minute is brought  
to you by...

***The Association of University  
Professors of Neurology***

Copyright 2024