



# Maine Initiative for Neurologic Aging and Health

## MAINAH

Fall 2025

 Northern Light<sup>SM</sup> Acadia Hospital

Dear MAINAH enrollee:

Welcome to the current edition of the MAINAH newsletter. We are delighted to share that our program dedicated to promoting healthy brain aging in the areas of memory, mood, and mobility, has expanded to include nearly 800 registered individuals from all regions of Maine. A warm welcome to those who have recently joined us!

MAINAH, an initiative of Northern Light Memory and Aging at Acadia Hospital, aims to connect with Mainers who are interested in maintaining brain health as they age. Our program focuses on three primary goals:

1. Disseminating valuable information on lifelong cognitive function and mobility maintenance.
2. Informing people about local research opportunities in cognitive aging.
3. Identifying genetic and lifestyle factors that contribute to healthy aging in Mainers through potential participation in a longitudinal study.

### **Participation in MAINAH and its research is free and voluntary.**

You can choose to be part of the registry, receive invitations to our annual webinars, and enjoy periodic newsletters.

We hope you can join our webinar on Tuesday, October 28 at 7pm, with special guest Alaina Reagan, Ph.D. from The Jackson Laboratory discussing the eye's relevance to Alzheimer's Disease. The link to join the conversation is <https://emhs.zoom.us/j/97885462244> or [click HERE](#). We hope you will join us.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement with MAINAH.

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Medical Director, Northern Light Memory and Aging  
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## Up updates on work around our Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant

In August 2024, Northern Light Acadia Hospital received \$1.3 million Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant with the help of Senator Susan Collins. This grant, which runs through July 2026, aims to improve dementia care throughout the Northern Light Health system and throughout the State of Maine. The focus is on enhancing medical and nursing education, implementing clinical practice tools, and increasing access to case consultation — especially in rural areas.

We’ve made significant progress in our three main objectives:

### 1. Create new training opportunities and resources for primary care providers:

- Launch of a dedicated website found at **[northernlighthealth.org/MemoryAndAging](http://northernlighthealth.org/MemoryAndAging)** featuring educational resources, link, and other information for patients and caregivers.
- We have hosted two statewide conferences offering clinical education in dementia care for providers across all disciplines, but especially primary care.
- We have established monthly “case conferences” providing an informal educational forum for clinicians to present and consult on complex cognitive cases.

- We delivered four webinars by Cynthia McDaniel, NP, the CEO of NurseLearn, offering targeted education trainings for direct care workers in inpatient and long-term care settings.
- We have acquired 50 Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MOCA) training certifications to enable providers across Maine to correctly administer and score this important screening tool for early detection of cognitive decline.
- *In development:* a decision algorithm (or clinical care pathway) integrated into the Electronic Health Records (EHR) to guide providers in their care of patients with cognitive impairment.

### 2. Increase the number of dementia specialists with new training programs:

- We were able to recruit two resident nurse practitioners through spring 2026 to gain advanced training in dementia care, with the goal of extending their expertise into communities across Maine
- *In progress:* development and accreditation of a neuropsychiatric fellowship program, with plans to welcome the first post-residency fellow in July 2027.

- Our team has created a specialized curriculum for third year psychiatry and family medicine residents at Eastern Maine Medical Center, aiming to develop more early-career dementia-capable clinicians.

### 3. Create a statewide consortium of dementia specialists and neuroscientists to promote state-of-the-art clinical practice and translational research.

- Northern Light Memory and Aging is engaged with a broad network of stakeholders statewide who have expressed a strong interest in ongoing collaboration toward this goal.

In addition to these initiatives, our team has been on the road hosting community events focused on Healthy Brain Aging — and we may be coming to a town near you!

**\*HRSA Grant GE1HS53336-01-00.** This project is funded in full by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$1.33 million. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit [HRSA.gov](http://HRSA.gov).



## New FDA-approved blood test detects Alzheimer’s Disease with high degree of accuracy

A breakthrough in Alzheimer’s research and medical care has been achieved with the development of blood tests that can accurately detect the disease.

Alzheimer’s disease (AD) is the most common cause of memory and cognitive decline in older adults, but many conditions can mimic Alzheimer’s. Traditional clinical methods of diagnosing AD are accurate less than 70% of the time, so specialized brain imaging techniques (“PET” scans) and lumbar punctures (“spinal taps”) were necessary for confirmation of Alzheimer’s pathology in the brain. The FDA has now approved a blood test, validated in a recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), as a cost-effective and non-invasive method of detecting the disease early. This, and similar tests, have **greater than 90% accuracy**. Greater accuracy in detecting Alzheimer’s disease is especially timely now that new treatments are available that only work for AD and therefore require highly reliable confirmation of AD as the primary cause of memory and cognitive impairment.

Although blood tests confirming the presence of Alzheimer’s disease have been available for several years to researchers and in memory specialty clinics, this recent FDA approval will

bring this technology into broader clinical use. These blood tests have revolutionized the way experts diagnose AD.

“Blood tests to confirm an AD diagnosis is a game-changer for clinical care and research,” says Cliff Singer, MD, director of Northern Light Memory and Aging at Acadia Hospital. “Early detection not only leads to more effective treatment but often means we can avoid more expensive and invasive testing.” Although Medicare will not yet approve reimbursement of the latest disease-modifying treatments for AD based on blood test evidence alone, experts expect this will soon change.

Like other diagnostic tests, blood tests for Alzheimer’s disease are only available for people who are already showing symptoms. Using these sensitive biomarker tests in people who may be worried about Alzheimer’s



but still perform normally on memory tests is at present limited to research studies. With regard to using these new blood tests in the clinic in people who are experiencing short-term memory loss, Dr. Singer cautions that they should only be used in the context of a comprehensive clinical evaluation for cognitive impairment consistent with published guidelines of the Alzheimer’s Association ([www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)) and National Institute on Aging ([www.nia.nih.gov](http://www.nia.nih.gov)).

For more information about Northern Light Memory and Aging and how to become involved in Alzheimer’s research here in Maine, visit our website, noted below.

*Coming soon...*

OUR NEW WEBSITE!

## Northern Light Memory and Aging

We are excited to announce the upcoming launch of a new Northern Light Memory and Aging website - packed full of helpful and informative resources for

- Patients
- Caregivers
- Medical Providers

[northernlighthealth.org/MemoryAndAging](http://northernlighthealth.org/MemoryAndAging)