Chapter 17 – Physical and Mental disabilities: Alzheimer’s and Diabetes

**SUMMARY**

Late adulthood is a period with many health transitions. Physical and mental disabilities such Alzheimer’s and Diabetes are two known disease that affect a large part of the elderly and some cases are also caused by genetics. Both these illnesses usually affect people aged 65 and up causing an impact on their lifestyle as well as their friends and family. Based on research, prevention can be taken in order to help reduce the incidence of these diseases, even though they are conditions that come with age. Some of these preventions include nutrition and regular exercise. Also, with cases such as Alzheimer’s and Diabetes, another risk factor can be social isolation, which can influence the disease greatly and cause more problems, such as depression.

**DEFINITIONS**

Amyloid plaques: dense deposits of a deteriorated protein called amyloid, surrounded by clumps of dead nerve and glial cells, develop outside of neurons.

Social isolation: The lack of interaction with others. This is common in the disabled and elderly, as well as in those with mental disorders.

* This can be linked to Erikson’s phase of development named Intimacy vs Isolation. Even though this stage is mostly related to middle adulthood, it applies in late adulthood also. This phase is said to cause a non-secure identity if you are lonely and socially isolated.

Alzheimer’s disease: the most common form of dementia, in which structural and chemical brain deterioration is associated with gradual loss of many aspects of thought and behavior.

* This disease goes against Vaillant’s Adaptation to Life theory, where Spirituality and Reflection are supposed to be in the last stage of late adulthood. Elders with this disease cannot be at peace and reflect back on their life.