

PREFACE

As the population ages, an increasing number of individuals are at risk for degenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease (AD). *Early Diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease* has been written out of the conviction that without an understanding of the complex issues surrounding the search for early markers for Alzheimer's disease, the prospects for early diagnosis and, consequently, the development of new interventions for the disease will, at best, be delayed. In the past few years, we have seen a proliferation of research on methods to detect Alzheimer's disease early in its course. It is an excellent time to take stock of the progress of this rapidly expanding field.

The chapters in *Early Diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease* review the most promising approaches in current research on early diagnostic markers for AD. These approaches include the elucidation of changes in the brain as seen in structural and functional neuroimaging, characteristic patterns of cognitive decline as documented by sensitive neuropsychological tests, various genetic markers, and a wide array of biological assays. We have placed these different approaches to early diagnosis within a broader context by also reviewing current clinical practice in diagnosing AD, major theories about its pathophysiology, and the therapeutic and ethical implications of early diagnosis. Each of the areas explored in *Early Diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease* holds promise for contributing to the development of strategies for meeting the diagnostic and therapeutic challenge posed by AD.

Early Diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease is addressed to a broad audience within the biomedical research and clinical communities. It should be of interest to clinicians who endeavor to care for an aging population, researchers working in the area of new therapeutic approaches to the disease, and policymakers who are concerned about the implications surrounding early diagnosis and the delivery of health care. Although the work gathered here provides a timely summary of different approaches for the early diagnosis of AD, we hope it will make a more lasting contribution in setting a framework for future research and critical thinking on the many issues surrounding early diagnosis. We are grateful to our fellow authors who have contributed their time and expertise to this work. Such a cooperative effort by many scholars from a variety of disciplines serves as a model for how important questions concerning diagnosis and therapy will need to be pursued to find adequate solutions to the puzzle of AD.

We thank the staff at Humana Press for their patience and care in the production of this volume. We appreciate the effort of Barbara Vericker during the planning and execution of this work. Her talents have added immeasurably to its successful completion.

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