

Manage Your Heart Health to Delay Alzheimer's, New Report Says

A new report issued by the Alzheimer's Association, entitled *2008 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures*, is a comprehensive statistical abstract of U.S. data on Alzheimer's disease that includes facts regarding prevalence, mortality, the costs of Alzheimer's care, family caregiving, and a special report on lifetime risk. According to the report:

Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia, accounting for 60 to 80 percent of cases. Alzheimer's disease is characterized by deposits in the brain of the protein fragment beta-amyloid (plaques) and twisted strands of the protein tau (tangles).

So far, there is no effective treatment to delay or stop the deterioration of brain cells that is the hallmark of Alzheimer's disease. The U. S. Food and Drug Administration has approved five drugs that temporarily slow worsening of the symptoms. On average, these drugs are effective for six to 12 months.

Active management of Alzheimer's disease consists of an appropriate medication regimen, counseling, supportive services, residential placements, and adult day services to improve the quality of life of those suffering from the disease and of those who care for them.

According to the report, a focus on prevention rather than cure of the disease is one of the most exciting developments in dementia research.

Evidence tantalizingly suggests that brain health is linked overall to the health of the body's vascular system -- the heart and blood vessels. Management of cardiovascular risk factors, therefore, such as cholesterol, diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, and even diet and exercise, may very well have salutary effects on avoiding or delaying cognitive decline.

Facts and Figures

- As many as 5.2 million people in the United States are living with Alzheimer's. This figure includes 200,000 persons under age 65 with early onset. The Alzheimer's Association estimates that there are approximately 500,000 Americans under age 65 who have Alzheimer's or another dementia, and about 40 percent of them have Alzheimer's disease.
- 10 million baby boomers will develop Alzheimer's in their lifetime. To put it another way, one out of every eight boomers will get the disease.
- Every 71 seconds, someone develops Alzheimer's.
- Alzheimer's is the seventh-leading cause of death.

- The direct and indirect costs of Alzheimer's and other dementias to Medicare, Medicaid and businesses amount to more than \$148 billion each year.
- With the growth of the older population and the aging of the baby boomer generation, the number of new cases will escalate rapidly over the next 40 years. By mid-century, someone will develop Alzheimer's disease every 33 seconds.

Link to the report: http://www.alz.org/national/documents/report_alzfactsfigures2008.pdf

For more information about how you can support education and research pertaining to Alzheimer's disease, contact the Mississippi Alzheimer's Association at 601-987-0020.

For help with legal and health-care planning for a family member with dementia, contact us at 1-866-ELDERLAW or www.elderlawms.com.