

alzheimer's  association®

**a call to congress:
make alzheimer's a
national priority**



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer®

Alzheimer's is a public health crisis.

One in eight Americans aged 65 and older has Alzheimer's disease — and another American develops Alzheimer's every 69 seconds. With the aging of the baby boomers, this number will only escalate in the future unless we act to stop Alzheimer's now. By 2050, someone will develop Alzheimer's every 33 seconds.

Alzheimer's is a national crisis, affecting Americans across all walks of life and across all regions of the country. The federal government must tackle Alzheimer's not only as an aging issue, but also as a public health crisis.

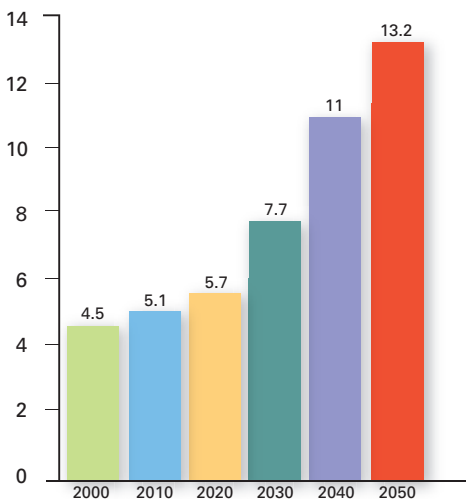
- An estimated 5.4 million Americans, including up to 200,000 people under age 65, have Alzheimer's disease. It is the sixth-leading cause of death in the United States.
- Nearly 15 million family members and friends face the enormous physical, emotional and financial impact of caring for a loved one with the disease — and provide more than \$202 billion annually in unpaid care.
- Medicare spending on seniors with Alzheimer's is three times higher than on those without the disease; Medicaid spending is nine times higher.

The Alzheimer's crisis will only get worse.

Alzheimer's kills, but not before it takes everything away. It steals a person's memories, judgment and independence. It robs spouses of lifetime companions and children of parents and grandparents. It destroys the financial security of millions of families.

With the aging of the baby boomers, the number of families affected — and the devastation the disease brings — will only get worse unless we take bold action today.

Millions of Americans aged 65 and older with Alzheimer's disease (middle estimate)



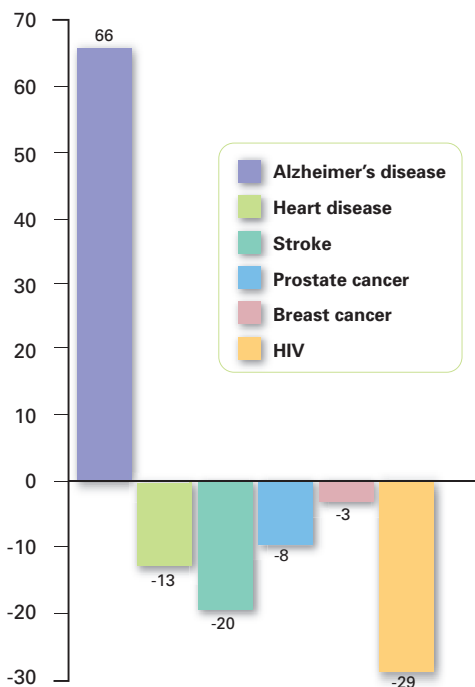
Source: Hebert et al., *Archives of Neurology*, 2003.

For more information on Alzheimer's statistics, see our *Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures* report at www.alz.org/facts.

The federal government cannot ignore Alzheimer's.

Alzheimer's is a fatal, irreversible disease. Today, there are no survivors. And, while the number of deaths from heart disease, prostate cancer, breast cancer, stroke and HIV are declining, the number of deaths from Alzheimer's are rising.

Percentage change in selected causes of death, 2000-2008



Source: National Center for Health Statistics. *Deaths: Final Data for 2000 and Deaths: Preliminary Data for 2008*

This devastating and heartbreaking disease cannot be ignored. The Alzheimer's Association calls on the federal government to take bold action to confront this epidemic.

action 1

Increase the commitment to Alzheimer's research.

Alzheimer's disease is the only cause of death among the top 10 in America without a way to prevent, cure or even slow its progression. This crisis can only be solved through a greater commitment to Alzheimer's research.

Scientists believe we are at a tipping point. We have the ideas, the technology and the will, but we do not have the commitment from the federal government to get the job done.

For every \$2.80 that Medicare and Medicaid spend caring for someone with Alzheimer's, the federal government invests only a penny on Alzheimer's research. To address this chronic underinvestment in research, the federal government must:

- Establish Alzheimer's disease as a research priority at the National Institutes of Health
- Provide sufficient research funding to develop treatments and a cure for Alzheimer's disease

We are going to pay for Alzheimer's one way or another — either now or later. Given the financial burden Alzheimer's puts on an already-strained Medicare program — and the growing burden it will place on the federal budget in the future — a commitment to research today will yield savings tomorrow.

action 2 Expand diagnosis and care planning.

In order to provide better medical care and outcomes for individuals with Alzheimer’s and other dementias, we must increase access to detection, diagnosis and care planning — and ensure that a diagnosis is noted in the individual’s medical record.

As many as half of those with the disease do not have a diagnosis in their medical record — and some evidence suggests that it could be as high as 80 percent.

Unfortunately, most people with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias have not been diagnosed.

This must change. Medicare must cover a package of primary care services to increase the possibility of diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias and to improve care. That package must include:

- Diagnostic evaluation
- Care planning
- Medical record documentation

Over the years, studies have shown that the provision of these types of services results in higher quality of care, increased use of needed community services, reduced patient behavioral and psychiatric symptoms, reduced caregiver stress and depression and better care coordination by multiple providers.

action 3 **Develop a coordinated strategic plan to address Alzheimer's disease.**

In 2050, up to 16 million Americans will have Alzheimer's disease, creating an enormous strain on the health care system, families and the federal budget. Yet there is no plan, no coordination and no focus on how to deal with this looming crisis.

Multiple federal agencies have Alzheimer's initiatives and programs, but there is no coordination of these efforts and no attempt to mount a full-scale campaign against the disease. Recognizing this growing crisis, Congress unanimously passed and President Obama signed into law the *National Alzheimer's Project Act* (NAPA), calling for the creation of a National Alzheimer's Disease Plan.

This plan would advance three main goals:

- Accelerate the development of treatments
- Focus and coordinate efforts across the federal government
- Improve early diagnosis and care coordination

The Secretary of Health and Human Services must thoroughly and expeditiously implement this law by creating a plan focused on outcomes and actions that will prevent, halt or reverse Alzheimer's and reduce the financial impact of the disease.



Make an impact in the fight against Alzheimer's.

To learn more about how the federal government can assist people with Alzheimer's, please call the Alzheimer's Association Public Policy Office at 202.393.7737 or contact **advocate@alz.org**.

For more information on the Alzheimer's Association constituent services, such as our 24/7 Helpline and CareFinder™, visit www.alz.org.

The Alzheimer's Association is the world's leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

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