

## People with Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia in Assisted Living

### **Half or more of all elderly assisted living residents have Alzheimer's disease or other dementias.**

Recent studies indicate that at least half of assisted living residents age 65+ have Alzheimer's disease, another disease or condition that causes dementia, or cognitive impairment that is probably caused by these diseases and conditions. Figures from different studies vary because of differences in the way residents with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are identified. Many assisted living residents with these conditions do not have a formal diagnosis, and assisted living staff members do not always recognize the conditions in their residents. Thus, studies that rely on diagnosis and staff reports will miss some residents with the conditions. Differences in the size of assisted living facilities included in each study also affect study findings.

### **Three studies conducted between 1997 and 2002 provide the most recent information about the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease and dementia in assisted living facilities:**

- Maryland Assisted Living Study. - This study, conducted in Maryland in 2001-02, found that 68% of elderly assisted living residents had dementia.<sup>1</sup> The study was conducted in a stratified random sample of 22 assisted living facilities, including 12 small facilities (less than 16 beds) and 10 larger facilities. Information was obtained on 198 elderly residents. Evaluations based on in-person examination by a geriatric psychiatrist and nurse, staff and family interviews, and medical record review show that 2/3 of the residents with dementia had Alzheimer's disease, and the remaining 1/3 had dementia caused by vascular disease and other diseases and conditions.
- Collaborative Studies of Long-Term Care. - This study, conducted in four states (FL, MD, NJ, NC) in 1997-98, concluded that, depending on the size and type of facility, 45%-63% of the elderly residents had cognitive impairment indicative of dementia.<sup>2</sup> The study was conducted in a stratified random sample of 193 assisted living facilities, including 113 small facilities (4-16 beds) and 80 larger facilities. Information was obtained on 2,078 elderly residents, using a measure of cognition based on staff report. The prevalence of cognitive impairment/dementia was highest in small facilities, where 32% of residents had mild or moderate cognitive impairment, and 31% had severe cognitive impairment.
- National Survey of Assisted Living Facilities. - This study, conducted in a national random sample of residential care facilities in 1998, concluded that about one third of elderly residents had *moderate to severe cognitive impairment* indicative of dementia (32 to 36% depending on the type of facility).<sup>3</sup> The study was conducted in 1,547 facilities that had 11 or more beds, primarily served elderly people, and called themselves "assisted living" or provided specified services, including 24-hour supervision. Information was obtained on 1,581 elderly residents, using a brief mental status test or, for those unable to respond to that test, a measure of cognition based on staff report. No information is available about the proportion of residents who had *mild cognitive impairment/dementia*, and small facilities, which had the highest proportion of residents were dementia in both other studies, were not included in this study.

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<sup>1</sup> Rosenblatt A, Samus QM, Steele CD, et al., "The Maryland Assisted Living Study: Prevalence, Recognition, and Treatment of Dementia and Other Psychiatric Disorders in the Assisted Living Population of Central Maryland," *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 52(10):1618-1625, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Sloane PD, Zimmerman S, and Ory MG, "Care for Persons With Dementia," in *Assisted Living: Needs, Practices, and Policies in Residential Care for the Elderly*, S Zimmerman, PD Sloane, and JK Eckert (eds) (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) pps. 242-270.

<sup>3</sup> Hawes C, Phillips CD, Rose M, et al. "A National Survey of Assisted Living Facilities," *Gerontologist*, 43(6):875-882.