

# Federal Funding For Alzheimer Research

## *A Race Against Time*

### **Objective**

\$1 billion in annual funding for Alzheimer research at the National Institutes of Health:

- To prevent or delay the onset of Alzheimer's in up to 14 million babyboomers
- To treat and delay progress of the disease in the 4 million who already have it

### **Status**

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) will spend an estimated \$650 million on Alzheimer research in fiscal year 2003. Congress is now considering funding for fiscal year 2004. Funds for Alzheimer research will be contained in a Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (Labor-HHS) Appropriations bill (no bill number yet.) Hearings will take place during the spring in the Labor, HHS Appropriations Subcommittees in the House and Senate. Initial decisions on Alzheimer funding will be made in Subcommittee "markup" following the hearings. Action by the full House and Senate will take place in late summer or early fall.

Congress has completed its 5-year campaign to double funding at NIH, which has brought significant increases for Alzheimer research. Now, the President has proposed a minimal 2% increase in NIH funding for FY04. That will not be enough to keep pace with inflation, much less continue the momentum of Alzheimer research.

### **Key Messages**

- Alzheimer's disease will destroy the health care system and bankrupt Medicare and Medicaid if left unchecked.
- There is a narrow window of time – 10 years at most – to prevent the devastating impact of Alzheimer's on families, businesses, and the US economy.
- The scientific opportunities exist to find the answers in time, if we make the necessary investment now.

(See **Talking Points** on the following page.)

### **KEY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS**

Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committee, especially the Subcommittee on Labor Health and Human Services

Speaker of the House, Majority and Minority Leaders and Majority and Minority Whips of the House and Senate

# Talking Points In Support Of An Immediate \$1 Billion Federal Investment In Alzheimer Research

**Alzheimer's will bankrupt Medicare and Medicaid and impose unsustainable costs on families, state and federal governments, and American business.**

- Medicare costs for a person with Alzheimer's (AD) are almost 3 times higher than the average for all beneficiaries. By 2025, annual Medicare costs for beneficiaries with AD will increase four-fold - to nearly \$294 billion.
- Nearly 60% of nursing home residents have AD or another dementia. By 2010, annual Medicaid costs just for those persons with AD in nursing homes will increase by over 80% - to \$33 billion.
- Alzheimer's costs American business \$61 billion a year – twice the cost estimated just four years ago. \$36.5 billion of that is in lost productivity of workers caring for someone with AD. \$24.6 billion is the business share of health care costs for people with AD.
- Families provide nearly 70% of Alzheimer care themselves. The average annual cost of paid help at home is \$19,000 and for nursing homes nearly \$64,000. Families bear those costs themselves as long as they can.

**There is a very narrow window of time to prevent an epidemic of Alzheimer's that will destroy the health care system.**

- 4.5 million people in the U.S. have Alzheimer's today. By the middle of the century, that number will grow to as many as 16 million.
- The number of new Alzheimer cases each year will more than double, from a little over 400,000 a year in 2000 to nearly 1 million a year by 2050.
- The changes in the brain that cause Alzheimer's begin 10 to 20 years before symptoms appear. Babyboomers start entering the age of greatest risk in 2010. To prevent the looming epidemic, answers have to come before then.
- If scientists can find ways in the next 10 years to delay the onset of AD and slow its progress, the number of babyboomers who get Alzheimer's will be cut by one-third. Among those who do get AD, the numbers who need full time care could be cut by 60%.

# Why Additional Funding For Alzheimer Research Now?

## Answers to Real Questions from Congress

**Q: Congress recently finished doubling the budget NIH. Why do they need more money?**

A: This prior investment in research has brought us to the point no one would have dreamed possible 5 years ago. We are on the brink of discovery, but only additional investment will maintain the momentum of research.

- The picture of the basic mechanisms of Alzheimer's disease is nearly complete.
- Advances in genetics and imaging give scientists the tools they need to find surrogate biomarkers and risk factors for Alzheimer's instead of waiting until symptoms appear. This is the key to a prevention strategy.
- Epidemiological research is rapidly identifying new targets for interventions – including compounds that are already widely available – that now must be tested in large scale clinical trials to see which may actually slow or prevent disease.
- The National Institute on Aging has built the interdisciplinary research infrastructure in the Alzheimer's Disease Centers and the Cooperative Study that make possible unprecedented levels of collaboration within and across academic settings – to find answers faster, cheaper and better.

**Q: If Congress increases funding for Alzheimer research, could the NIH spend it well?**

A: Scientists are poised to pursue very clear investigative pathways. Only the NIH, and especially the National Institute on Aging, has the infrastructure, the leadership, and the influence to bring together the public and private resources and stimulate the collaboration needed now. Additional funding would allow scientists to:

- Put together the last pieces of the basic puzzle of Alzheimer's disease. Less than one in four promising projects can be funded at current levels. Cost of funding even another 10% of the best proposals at NIA alone would approach \$30 million.
- Initiate the large-scale clinical trials, which are the only way to prove whether new targets for prevention will actually work. Cost: \$25 to \$30 million each.
- Develop surrogate biomarkers of Alzheimer's to speed clinical trials by proving the efficacy of new drugs in the presymptomatic stage. Cost: \$60 million.
- Complete the search for genetic risk factors of Alzheimer's, to target new prevention and treatments to those who need them. Cost: \$60 million.