

ALZHEIMER'S REMAINS UNDETECTED IN A MAJORITY OF CASES

*As 10 Million Baby Boomers Develop Alzheimer's,
Early Detection Becomes Critical to Future Planning*



LOS ANGELES (May 20, 2009) – Current data suggests that less than 35 percent of people with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias have a diagnosis of the condition in their medical records¹ While there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's – a fatal brain disease that gets worse over time and causes changes in memory, thinking and reasoning – early detection and diagnosis is critical to ensuring the more than 5 million Americans living with Alzheimer's have the power to plan their own healthcare and futures.

“Memory loss that disrupts everyday life, such as forgetting recently learned information to the point of asking for the same information over and over or losing abilities that interfere with the normal activities of daily living, is *not* a typical part of aging. It may be a sign of Alzheimer's disease,” said Dr. Debra Cherry, executive vice president of the Alzheimer's Association, California Southland Chapter. “By getting diagnosed late in the progression of the disease, opportunities are being missed to make key decisions about treatment, care and future planning. Being diagnosed early is vital to receiving the best help and care possible.”

There are many physical, emotional and social benefits of early detection, diagnosis and intervention. People who receive an early diagnosis of Alzheimer's are empowered to:

- Participate in decisions about their own treatment and care.

¹ Boise L, Neal MB, and Kaye J. Dementia assessment in primary care: Results from a study in three managed care systems. *Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences* 2004; 59A (6):621-626.
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Ganguli M, Rodriguez E, Mulsant B, Richards S Pandav R, Bilt, JV, et al. Detection and Management of Cognitive Impairment in Primary Care: The Steel Valley Seniors Survey. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 2004; 52:1668-1675.
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- Access community resources through the Alzheimer's Association or other organizations to find information and support.
- Plan for future care options, including identifying social and community resources to support independence as long as possible.
- Seek prescribed medication that can provide some relief.
- Participate in Alzheimer's clinical studies to take greater control of their healthcare and benefit future generations.

Though early detection, family members and friends of people diagnosed with Alzheimer's are empowered to:

- Plan together for the future
- Learn the signs to watch for and how treatment can help.
- Identify ways to adapt activities to promote existing skills and interests of loved one with dementia.
- Discover how to care for someone with Alzheimer's, as they progress.
- Learn strategies for talking to physicians.
- Reduce stress by connecting with the Alzheimer's Association and other community resources.
- Find resources to help assist with the daily tasks that become challenging and time-consuming during long-term caregiving.

The public recognizes the urgency of early detection of Alzheimer's disease. In 2008, "Early Detection Matters" was selected as the winner in the American Express Members Project competition. With the help of the \$1.5 million award from American Express, the Alzheimer's Association is implementing a national education campaign. The *Know the 10 Signs: Early Detection Matters* campaign will promote public understanding of the disease, increase awareness of the benefits of Alzheimer's early detection and increase the number of people talking to their doctors about warning signs.

For more information on the benefits of early detection of Alzheimer's disease, visit the Alzheimer's Association at www.alz.org/10signs or call the toll-free line, 877-IS IT ALZ.

The Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer 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. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's. For more information, visit www.alz.org/californiasouthland .

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