



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

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**NIH STATE-OF-THE-SCIENCE CONFERENCE REPORT ON
PREVENTING ALZHEIMER'S AND COGNITIVE DECLINE**
Alzheimer's Association Statement

Washington, DC, April 28, 2010 – Alzheimer's disease is one of the most critical unaddressed health issues in America. Yet we are so far from meeting the challenges of this looming crisis.

According to the Alzheimer's Association's *2010 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures*, there are as many as 5.3 million Americans living with Alzheimer's, and every 70 seconds someone in America develops the disease. Alzheimer's was the seventh leading cause of death in the country in 2006, the latest year for which final death statistics are available.

It is critical that we, as a nation, significantly increase investments in Alzheimer research. In addition to the devastating impact on families, Alzheimer's also threatens the nation's health care system because of its significant costs. Again according to *Facts and Figures*, the total payments for health and long-term care services for people with Alzheimer's and other dementias will amount to \$172 billion from all sources in 2010. The average per person Medicaid payments were 9 times higher; Medicare payments were 3 times higher, and private insurance were 26 percent higher for older people with Alzheimer's and other dementias compared to other older people. If nothing is done to stop this disease, by mid-century as many as 16 million Americans will have Alzheimer's disease. America simply cannot afford this human, social and economic burden.

There are still many unanswered questions about the causes of Alzheimer's disease and cognitive decline in aging. Biomarkers, diagnostics, progression models, quality indicators, and longitudinal clinical trials are critically necessary, and are all expensive and challenging areas of science. Unless we dedicate significant funding to these efforts, we will continue struggling to conduct this research.

There is a growing body of evidence that strongly suggests Alzheimer's disease can be prevented in the future. Robust funding to explore this area of science is also necessary. In the mean time, existing evidence-based guidance about brain health and maintaining cognitive abilities as we age must be promoted to the general public today to increase critical knowledge about Alzheimer's, and help separate fact from myth.

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Discovering effective interventions that prevent onset or delay disease progression takes on an all encompassing urgency as the nation braces for an aging baby boomer generation. Alzheimer's disease, unlike any other, has the power to undermine all of our best efforts to control healthcare costs. We know what the future will bring if we do nothing - more lives lost, overloaded nursing homes, overworked caregivers, and an overwhelmed health care system.

The good news is that we, as a nation, know how to rise to meet such an overwhelming challenge. Although there is more work to be done, we can learn from the successes as a result of the war on cancer and the concerted effort to understand, prevent, and treat HIV/AIDS. In fact, as the panel mentioned, from 2000 to 2006, death rates have declined for most major diseases, including some cancers and HIV/AIDS, while Alzheimer's disease deaths rose 46.1 percent. We must stem the tide. We must create a national, coordinated effort with commensurate, appropriate strategic investment in Alzheimer research funding to meet this crisis. It is the only way forward.

The Association is working to enact critical legislation to address these issues. The Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act will provide \$2 billion in Alzheimer research funding at NIH; The National Alzheimer's Project Act will launch a coordinated campaign in the Federal government and creates an inter-agency Advisory Council responsible for creating a national plan to overcome the Alzheimer's disease crisis. These solutions are critical to securing necessary resources and providing the strategic planning and coordination to the fight against Alzheimer's disease and meet the burgeoning public health need.

About 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.

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