

**CONTACT:** Niles Frantz, Alzheimer's Association, 312-335-5777, [niles.frantz@alz.org](mailto:niles.frantz@alz.org)  
Alzheimer's Association media line, 312-335-4078, [media@alz.org](mailto:media@alz.org)

**WORLD ALZHEIMER REPORT CONFIRMS INTERVENTIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH  
MILD DEMENTIA BENEFICIAL; SUGGESTS ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE TO  
EARLY DIAGNOSIS**

***- Report Calls on Governments to Increase Early Diagnosis and Treatment of Dementia -***

CHICAGO, September 13, 2011 – A new report released today by Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) shows that there are a variety of beneficial treatments and interventions – including drug and non-drug therapies – for people with Alzheimer's and their caregivers, even in the early stages of the disease. In addition, the report's review of economic models suggests a possible financial benefit to countries and healthcare systems with early diagnosis and treatment/intervention.

As a result, ADI recommends that every country develop a national dementia strategy that promotes early diagnosis and intervention. According to ADI, key pillars should include:

- 1) Raising awareness of the value of early detection and available interventions.
- 2) Strengthening the medical and service infrastructure.
- 3) Funding Alzheimer's/dementia research – especially randomized controlled trials to test the efficacy of interventions specifically tailored to those with early-stage dementia.

The report also confirms a grave, worldwide “treatment gap” in Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Through an extensive, first-time review of the research literature, the report demonstrates the overwhelming difference between the number of people with the disease – more than 35 million worldwide – and those who have a formal diagnosis, with undiagnosed cases ranging from 20 percent in some countries to 90 percent in others.

The report, titled “World Alzheimer Report 2011: The Benefits of Early Diagnosis and Intervention,” was released during the first World Alzheimer's Month. ADI is the international federation of Alzheimer's associations throughout the world; the Alzheimer's Association (U.S.) is a member of ADI.

“We strongly support ADI's call in the report for every country to have a national Alzheimer's plan that promotes early diagnosis and treatment,” said Robert Egge, Alzheimer's Association vice president of public policy.

“As part of the Association's participation in the development and implementation of a national Alzheimer's plan in the United States, key elements of the findings of the new ADI report – such

as raising awareness of available options for people with Alzheimer's, expanding services for people with dementia and their families, educating medical professionals about Alzheimer's, strengthening the medical infrastructure, and funding more Alzheimer's research – are all part of our vision for an effective and comprehensive Alzheimer's plan that meets the needs of everyone involved," Egge said.

According to the Alzheimer's Association's *2011 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures*, as many as half of the estimated 5.4 million Americans with Alzheimer's do not have a diagnosis.

Egge adds, "This compounds the burden of Alzheimer's, making access to appropriate health care, information and support extremely difficult."

A formal and documented diagnosis helps the individual and their family expect and explain behaviors, and opens doors to vital care and support services – including the option of participating in clinical trials. Early detection also allows for prompt evaluation and treatment of reversible or treatable causes of memory and thinking problems. Reflecting the importance of early detection of Alzheimer's, the Alzheimer's Association *2011 Alzheimer's Disease Facts & Figures* contained a special report on early detection and diagnosis.

Memory loss that disrupts daily life is not a typical part of aging. It may be a symptom of Alzheimer's disease. The Alzheimer's Association has created the 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's. More information about the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease is available at [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org) in English, Spanish, Chinese, and other languages.

### **Actions Toward a National Alzheimer's Plan in the U.S.**

The National Alzheimer's Project Act (NAPA) was passed unanimously by both houses of Congress and signed into law by President Obama on January 4, 2011. The law will create a national strategic plan to address the rapidly escalating Alzheimer's crisis and will coordinate Alzheimer's disease efforts across the federal government.

Throughout August and September, the Alzheimer's Association has been holding more than 100 public input sessions for the national Alzheimer's plan. All the input gathered from these sessions and the Association's website will be developed into a report and presented to Administration officials, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the NAPA Advisory Council this fall. For more information and to voice an opinion, visit [www.alz.org/napa](http://www.alz.org/napa).

"By making Alzheimer's a national priority, we have the potential to create the same success that has been demonstrated in the fights against other diseases. Leadership from the federal government has helped lower the number of deaths from other major diseases such as HIV/AIDS, heart disease, prostate cancer, breast cancer and stroke," said Egge.

### **Findings of the World Alzheimer Report 2011**

For the World Alzheimer Report 2011, ADI commissioned an independent research group to

collate and review, for the first time, all of the available evidence relating to early diagnosis and early intervention. The analyses commissioned for the Report found that:

- 1) Around the world, the great majority of people with Alzheimer's and related dementias are undiagnosed, and therefore without access to proper treatment, care, information and support. In high-income countries, 20-50 percent of dementia cases are documented in primary care. The "treatment gap" is likely much larger in low- and middle-income countries; a study from India suggests 90 percent of cases there are undiagnosed.
- 2) A variety of beneficial interventions can make a difference for people diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease/dementia, even in the early stages of the illness.
  - There are drug and non-drug (educational, psychological, psychosocial) interventions that show benefit and promise for people in the earliest stages of Alzheimer's, their caregivers and family members – for cognition, functioning, mood, and quality of life.
  - The lack of early detection and treatment denies opportunities for improving the quality of life for millions of people with dementia around the world and their families.
  - Early detection empowers people with dementia to plan ahead while they still have the capacity to make decisions about their future care and participation in research on treatments and a cure.
- 3) Economic models suggest that the projected costs associated with earlier diagnosis and intervention would be more than offset by potential future savings, for example from delayed institutionalization. These economic model analyses need confirmation, and additional analyses are needed that go beyond pure modeling and incorporate "real world" data.
- 4) Research in this area is in its infancy; much more research is needed.

"The World Alzheimer Report 2011 makes it clear that governments worldwide must invest now to save their social and healthcare systems from being overwhelmed by dementia-related costs," Egge said.

### **World Alzheimer's Month 2011**

Due to the soaring global prevalence and costs of Alzheimer's disease, the Alzheimer's Association is observing the inaugural World Alzheimer's Month in September 2011.

The latest estimates show that there are more than 35 million people living with dementia worldwide, including as many as 5.4 million in the U.S, according to the Alzheimer's Association's *2011 Alzheimer's Disease Facts & Figures* report. Without new breakthroughs in treatment and prevention, this number will grow to between 11 and 16 million in the United States by 2050. The total estimated worldwide costs of dementia are \$604 billion, according to the World Alzheimer Report 2010. In the U.S., for people with Alzheimer's and other dementias, aggregate payments for health care, long-term care and hospice are projected to increase from \$183 billion in 2011 to \$1.1 trillion in 2050 (*2011 Alzheimer's Disease Facts & Figures*).

"The end of Alzheimer's has to start now. It starts with you. It starts with me. It starts with all of us." Egge said. "We invite all Americans to join the Alzheimer's Association in raising awareness about Alzheimer's by declaring 'The End of Alzheimer's Starts with Me' and going purple on September 21, 2011 – Alzheimer's Action Day." Take action at [www.alz.org/wam](http://www.alz.org/wam).

## **Alzheimer's Association**

The Alzheimer's Association is the world's 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. Visit [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org) or call 800-272-3900.

###