

Care Partners Newsletter

Depression and Dementia

It is estimated that 20 to 40 percent of individuals with Alzheimer's disease will experience an episode of significant depression. It has been shown that when a person with Alzheimer's disease receives treatment for their depression, it can improve their sense of well-being, quality of life, and their ability to function, despite the presence of ongoing decline in memory and thinking.

Identifying depression in Alzheimer's disease can be difficult. The cognitive impairment experienced by people with Alzheimer's often makes it hard for them to express their sadness, hopelessness, guilt and other feelings associated with depression.

If you suspect that a person with Alzheimer's disease is depressed, the first step in diagnosis is a thorough professional evaluation. Side effects of medication or an unrecognized medical condition can sometimes produce symptoms of depression. Key elements of the evaluation will include a review of the person's medical history, a physical and mental examination, and interviews with family members who know the

(Continued on page 2)

Next month's Care Partner topic

"Working With Your Doctor"

When you attend one of our support groups you can expect to find...

- practical information you can use as you learn more about caregiving;
- a mutually supportive group of people who understand the experience of caring for a person with dementia.

For a list of Alzheimer's Association co-sponsored support groups call us at 800 272-3900 or visit our website at: www.alz.org/gmc and follow the Support Group link on the left side of the home page.

Inside this Edition

Depression and Dementia	1 & 2
Depression and Memory	2
SMART New Year's Resolutions	3
New Comfort Zone Safety-Service Program from the Alz Association	4
Upcoming Care Partner Events	5 & 6

(Continued from page 1)

person well. Because of the complexities involved in diagnosing depression in someone with Alzheimer's, it may be helpful to consult a geriatric psychiatrist who specialized in recognizing and treating depression in older adults.

The most common treatment for depression in Alzheimer's involves a combination of medications, support and gradual reconnection to favored activities and people. Once a person with Alzheimer's disease is diagnosed with depression and has begun medical treatment for the disorder, the following supportive suggestions should be tried:

- Schedule a predictable daily routine, taking advantage of the person's best time of day to undertake difficult tasks, such as bathing.
- Make a list of activities, people or places that the person currently enjoys and schedule these things more frequently.
- Help the person exercise regularly, particularly in the morning.
- Acknowledge the person's frustration or sadness, while continuing to express hope that he or she will feel better soon.
- Celebrate small successes and occasions.

Find ways that the person can contribute to family life and be sure to recognize his or her contributions. At the same time, provide reassurance that the person is loved, respected and appreciated as part of the family, and not just for what she or he can do now.

Depression can worsen memory in the following ways:

- It impairs concentration and therefore, learning
- Stress and depression may damage nerve cells, adding to the damage already caused by Alzheimer's
- Depression may worsen some medical problems, such as heart disease
- Autopsies of people with Alzheimer's reveal that those who were depressed had more plaque in their brains than the non-depressed individuals.

Taken from: [The Alzheimer's Action Plan](#) (2008) by P. Murali Doraiswamy, MD and Lisa P. Gyther, MSW
Duke University Center for Aging, pp. 281-2, (New York, St. Martin's Press).

“SMART” New Year’s Resolutions for Caregivers

Making New Year’s resolutions is a time honored exercise that, if you’re not successful, may make you feel like a failure. This year why not start with these suggestions that may help you create empowering New Year’s resolutions for improved health and well-being:

1. I will honor my life experience, appreciate my strengths and abilities, and love myself.
2. I will make changes for me, not for anyone else.
3. I will get more in touch with my body and listen to what it is telling me.
4. I will ask for support from family, friends, and others if I need it, and I will offer support when needed.
5. I will pick one or two things to work on and set goals that are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-based).
6. I will try something new.
7. I will connect with others.
8. I will have fun.
9. I will start by taking small steps.
10. I will give myself credit for what I accomplish.

By Chaya Gordon, (2006) Healthword e-newsletter produced by the American Society on Aging.

The National Institute on Aging has written a book that they will send to you **free of charge**. The book is titled: Caring for a Person with Alzheimer’s Disease: Your easy-to-use guide.

It is a 136 page guide written in an easy to understand format covering a wide variety of topics useful to caregivers. To get your copy contact:

The Alzheimer’s Disease Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center
Phone: 1-800-438-4380 or visit their website: www.nia.nih.gov/Alzheimers

The ADEAR Center is a service of the National Institute on Aging and is funded by the United States government.

Comfort Zone brings families peace of mind

Alzheimer's Association Comfort Zone™, powered by Omnilink, is a new comprehensive Web-based location management service that provides the entire family peace of mind while giving people with Alzheimer's the freedom and independence they want. Family members can have knowledge of a person's location, while individuals with Alzheimer's can enjoy the emotional security of familiar routines and surroundings.

Working with a tracking device, such as a car-mounted unit, pocket device or wrist-worn device, Comfort Zone is a secure Web application that allows family members to:

- remotely monitor the location of the person with Alzheimer's.
- set up safety zones.
- receive alerts (via text or e-mail) when he or she has traveled beyond a pre-set zone.

Among the benefits Comfort Zone provides:

Choice – It works with a variety of devices and you can choose the monthly plan that meets your needs.

Monitoring Center – A 24/7 call center to help with technical questions and location management in the event you cannot access the Internet.

Emergency Health Record – Included is an annual membership for MedicAlert® + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return®, which provides 24-hour emergency response service for wandering and medical emergencies.

Comprehensive Alzheimer's Services – The Alzheimer's Association provides 24/7 care consultation, safety education and Alzheimer's disease resources.

Purchase the service that provides peace of mind. To learn more about Comfort Zone and find a plan that meets your needs, visit www.alz.org/comfortzone or call 1.877.ALZ.4850.

It is common for a person with dementia to wander and become lost; many do repeatedly. In fact, over 60 percent of those with dementia will wander at some point during the course of the disease. Wandering can be dangerous—even life threatening.

The Alzheimer's Association and MedicAlert Foundation International have formed an alliance to improve the safety of individuals with Alzheimer's or a related dementia. MedicAlert + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return is a 24-hour nationwide emergency response service for individuals with Alzheimer's or a related dementia who wander or have a medical emergency.

To enroll a person with dementia call: 1-888-572-8566 or go to the website at:
www.medicalert.org/safereturn

Upcoming Care Partner Events

Caregiver Resource Network's Calendar of Events

The Caregiver Resource Network (CRN) is a collaboration of West Michigan organizations dedicated to providing for the needs and welfare of family and professional caregivers within the community.

The CRN's website is an excellent source of information for caregivers including a **local calendar of events**. The calendar is usually posted in the third week of the month for the upcoming month and contains information about support groups, educational, and recreational opportunities of interest to caregivers.

Visit the web site at: <http://www.caregiverresource.net>

Ionia County Community Mental Health

Making Memories Respite

Who: Persons with Alzheimer's or other dementia and Adults 60 & over

When: December 9th and 16th (11:00 am to 4:00 pm)

Cost: Free (Lunch Provided)

Where: Temple Baptist Church, 1978 S. State Road, Ionia, MI 48846

To register or if you have questions contact Becky Flint at Ionia County Community Mental Health, 375 Apple Tree Drive, Ionia, MI 48846 or phone: 616-527-1790

Get Away Day for Caregivers

Wednesday, December 9, 2009 (meet at Care Tree at 10:45 AM)

Lunch at Noel Restaurant (2371 Riley Street, Jamestown, MI)

Shopping after lunch

Offered by Holland Home, this is a fun, recreational outing planned by caregivers and staff. This program is designed to provide caregivers with the opportunity to enjoy some time for themselves, away from the duties of caregiving. Transportation available for the first 23 people to sign up.

Meet at Care Tree—800 East Beltline NE at 10:45 AM

Call ahead if you need respite care for your loved one, and to make a reservation.

Contact: Audrey at (616)464-3665

Upcoming Care Partner Events

“3-Part Alzheimer’s Education Series” in Wyoming

January 11, 18, 25, 2010 from 2:00 to 4:00 PM

Metro Health Professional Building — Conference Rooms
(on the Metro Health Hospital Campus)
2122 Health Drive SW, Wyoming, MI 49519
(616) 252-7341

- Week 1
(Monday, Jan 11) **Understanding Alzheimer’s Disease & Related Dementias**
Mark DeVries, PhD, Psychologist,
Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services
- Week 2
(Monday, Jan 18) **Legal & Financial Issues**
Brian Plachta, Elder Law Attorney
- Week 3
(Monday Jan 25) **Strategies for Navigating the Dementia Journey**
Christiana Getz, Program Coordinator, Alzheimer’s Association

Refreshments provided by Beacon Hill at Eastgate

Provided with financial support from the Older Americans Act National Family Caregiver Support Funds administered by the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan, Inc. A donation of \$10 per person (or family) per session is suggested.

Please call to reserve your seat or for more information: (616) 459-4558 or (800) 272-3900

Families and Friends of Aging Adults
(There is no meeting for the month of December, 2009)
Tuesday, January 26, 2010 (7:00 - 9:00 PM)

January Topic: The Pain Game: Playing to Overcome

Speakers: Kathy Higgins and Jamie Zimmerman, Emerald Meadows of Cascade

Public is welcome—free of charge. Format is one hour for the speaker, refreshment break, a time for sharing facilitated by Ron Rozema

Meets at: Thornapple Evangelical Covenant Church, 6595 Cascade Road, SE, Grand Rapids. For more information call: Julie Griffin at (616) 243-8118 or Ron Rozema (616) 222-4522

Interim Guidance for 2009 H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu):

Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home

Visit the website: http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm
