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ALZHEIMER'S REMAINS UNDETECTED IN MAJORITY OF CASES

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

CHICAGO, IL--- 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 record (Boise et al., 2004; Boustani et al., 2005; Ganguli et al., 2004; Valcour et al. 2000). 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 future.

"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 relying on memory aides is *not* a typical part of aging. It may be a sign of Alzheimer's disease," said Erna Colborn, president and CEO for the Alzheimer's Association - Greater Illinois 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 for people with Alzheimer's and their caregivers. People who receive an early diagnosis of Alzheimer's are empowered to:

- Participate in decisions about treatment and care.
- 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.

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¹Boise 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.

Boustani M, Callahan CM, Unverzagt FW, Austrom MG, Perkins AJ, Fultz BA, et al. Implementing a screening and diagnosis program for dementia in primary care. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. 2005; 20:572-577.

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.

Valcour VG, Masaki KH, Curb JD, and Blanchette PL. The detection of dementia in the primary care setting. *Archives of Internal Medicine* 2000;160:2964-2968.

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 implemented a national education campaign. The *Know the 10 Signs: Early Detection Matters* campaign promotes 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.

About the Alzheimer's Association - The Alzheimer's Association, the world leader in Alzheimer research and support, is the largest voluntary health organization dedicated to finding prevention methods, treatments and cure for Alzheimer's. Since 1980, the donor supported, nonprofit Alzheimer's Association has provided reliable information and care consultation; created supportive services for families; increased funding for dementia research; and influenced public policy changes. **The Greater Illinois Chapter** serves dozens of counties with offices in Bloomington, Carterville, Chicago, Joliet, Rockford and Springfield. For more information, call our Helpline at 800-272-3900 or visit www.alz.org/illinois.

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