



Health Care Legislation's Effect on Persons with Dementia

President Obama just signed into law the **Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act**. While the Alzheimer's Association does not endorse any specific health care reform legislation throughout the legislative process, the Alzheimer's Association Public Policy team, has been hard at work for over a year to ensure that all health care reform bills under consideration contained the strongest provisions possible to address the particular challenges and concerns of our constituents.

Several provisions in the final bill signed by the President will deliver substantial benefits to those with Alzheimer's and other dementias and their caregivers. Whatever your views about the overall legislation - and I know these views vary - several specific provisions are items we can and should celebrate, including:

- Establishment of a national voluntary insurance program known as the CLASS Act to provide benefits for long-term care services and supports, such as respite care, home care aides, and accessible transportation.
- Creation of a new demonstration project known as the Innovation Center to examine ways to promote care coordination in the Medicare program, including for individuals with Alzheimer's and other dementias.
- Establishment of a Medicare pilot program to provide transitional care to seniors at a high risk of reentering a hospital, including those with cognitive impairment.

It's important to note that many of the changes to the private insurance market in this bill will help address the particularly difficult challenges faced by those with Early Onset Alzheimer's disease (EOAD). Most significantly, when these provisions take effect, the legislation will increase the availability of health insurance coverage to those with pre-existing conditions and provide guaranteed issue and renewability, ensuring that individuals with EOAD can more easily obtain, maintain, and retain health insurance. Many with EOAD face great financial challenges, and these individuals will be aided by premium assistance tax credits, caps on total out-of-pocket spending, and expanded eligibility for Medicaid. These provisions, combined with the recent victory on the Social Security Administration's Compassionate Allowances Initiative, will address some of the most pressing health care concerns we have heard from those we represent with EOAD.

These recent public policy accomplishments reflect the Alzheimer's Association's growing influence and the resonance of our messages on behalf of our constituents. While we are pleased with these achievements and believe they will provide needed support for the more than 5 million people with Alzheimer's and their almost 11 million caregivers, we will rely on you to continue to move our cause forward. Together with our ever-expanding team of grassroots advocates, Ambassadors, and influencers, we can increase the momentum and ultimately realize our vision of a world without Alzheimer's.

To learn more about these and other provisions, please visit the Alzheimer's Association [website](#). To add your voice to our advocates and share your views with our representatives, click [here](#).

Uniform Guardianship and Jurisdiction Act Signed



House File 734, **Uniform Adult Guardianship and Protective Proceedings Jurisdiction Act** was signed into law by Iowa Governor Chet Culver on March 22, 2010. The new law will assist in the resolution of interstate guardianship issues which will benefit Iowans with dementia, especially those who have guardianships in Iowa but spend winters in other states, caregivers in other states and/or those who may wander across state lines. The Alzheimer's Association, Iowa Chapter Network, along with the Uniform Law Commissioners of Iowa, advocated for this legislation.



(left to right) Duane Gross, PhD; John Morris, MD; Larry Guenther, MBA; and William Burke, MD

Midlands Chapter's Regional Dementia Care Conference - a Great Success

On March 19, 2010, the Alzheimer's Association Midlands Chapter hosted the Dementia Care Conference, "Fitting the Pieces Together." Approximately 200 attendees spent the day at the Tip Top Ballroom, representing providers, nurses, caregivers, and students. Credit for CEUs and CMEs was available to professionals as well.

The keynote speaker was **Dr. John Morris**, professor of neurology and director of the Memory and Aging Project at Washington University. Dr. Morris spoke about the growing numbers of Baby Boomers affected by Alzheimer's disease as they age. His keynote address provided an update on current Alzheimer's research, advances in early detection and an overview of new therapeutic strategies.

Through out the day, presenters spoke on how to apply to clinical trials, the value of support groups, improving outpatient dementia care, current research on apathy, diabetes, and dementia, healthy lifestyles, home modifications to improve the quality of life, current and future treatments, and best practices in dementia care.

Caregivers May Be Eligible for Tax Savings

Before you send your tax returns to the IRS, make sure you get the tax-savings you deserve. As a caregiver for a loved one with dementia, you may qualify for tax deductions and credits.



Tax Deductions

The cost of Alzheimer care is high. Because caregivers pay for most care expenses out of pocket, they may be eligible for some tax deductions.

Deductible caregiving costs may include:

- Medical care, including nursing care
- Transportation essential to medical care
- In-home care, such as physical therapy
- Personal care items, such as disposable briefs and special foods
- Nursing home care
- Assisted living or other residential care
- Home modifications such as grab bars or wheel chair ramps

A caregiver can take federal income tax deductions only if the person with dementia has been certified as chronically ill. This certification must have been made by a licensed health care practitioner within the last 12 months.

Long-term care services must be given under a prescribed plan of care. Be sure to keep records about your payment for services, and save certifications and plans of care. For more details on deducting caregiving costs, see [IRS Publication 502, Medical and Dental Expenses](#).

Tax Credits

If you paid someone to care for a child or a dependent so you could work or look for work, you may be able to reduce your tax by claiming the "Child and Dependent Care Credit" on your federal income tax return.

The credit is a percentage of the amount of work-related child and dependent care expenses you paid to a care provider. The credit can be up to 35 percent of your qualifying expenses, depending on your income. There are eligibility requirements to receive this credit. For more details, see [IRS Publication 503, Child and Dependent Care Expenses](#).

Certain states have additional tax deductions or tax credits to provide financial relief to caregivers. These tax programs build on the federal tax credit, which reduces the amount of income taxes a family owes. Each state program differs by name and eligibility requirements. Consult the table on our Tax Deductions and Credits fact sheet to see if your state offers this type of credit or deduction.

Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE)

Helps people age 60 and older. Trained volunteers from non-profit organizations provide free tax counseling and basic income tax return preparation for senior citizens. Many of the volunteer counselors come from AARP's Tax-Aide program. To find one near you, call AARP at 1.888.227.7669 or visit [AARP's Web site](#).

This information does not constitute financial, legal or tax advice. The determination of how the tax laws affect a taxpayer is dependent on the taxpayer's particular situation. Taxpayers should seek help from a competent tax professional for advice about the proper application of the law to their situation.

More Information

IRS Web site: <http://www.irs.gov/>
IRS Tax Helpline: 1.800.829.1040



Advocates Swarm Capitol Hill to Ask For Support in Fight Against Alzheimer's

The **2010 Advocacy Forum** in Washington, D.C. included advocates from around the nation. They made nearly 300 visits to members of Congress on Capitol Hill, sharing personal stories and statistics to advance the fight against Alzheimer's disease.

Wearing purple sashes, advocates from Nebraska and Iowa visited lawmakers asking their support for the Alzheimer's Association's 2010 federal priorities. The three pieces of legislation that advocates focused on were: the **Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act** (H.R. 3286/S.1492), which would bring research funding for Alzheimer's disease up to \$2 billion at the National Institutes of Health; the **Alzheimer's Detection, Diagnosis, Care, and Planning (ADD-CAP) Act**, providing Medicare reimbursement for a bundled package of services to increase the diagnosis of Alzheimer's; and the **National Alzheimer's Project Act** (S.3036/H.R. 4689), which would launch an inter-agency Advisory Council to create a coordinated National Alzheimer's Disease Plan.

Clayton Freeman, Program Director and **Allan and Sharon Schur**, Chapter Advocates and members of the Young-Onset support group visited the offices of Nebraska **Representatives Lee Terry, Adrian Smith and Jeff Fortenberry** and **Senators Mike Johanns and Ben Nelson**, using a three-pronged, team approach to introduce the issues, each relaying their personal experiences with the disease and explaining a specific piece of legislation. The Iowa delegation headed by **Marian Johnsen**, Advocacy coordinator for the Iowa Chapter network visited with **Senator Grassley** and **Representatives Latham and Boswell**.

Allan and Sharon Schur, Chapter Advocates share their reflections on the forum:

"The candlelight ceremony at the Lincoln Memorial was so very touching and meaningful. I felt the unity and strength of all those that who were present there combined with the thoughts, prayers and 'virtual candles' of the thousands of others who participated online!", Sharon A. Schur exclaimed. "The experience was both emotionally exhilarating and physically exhausting..... and we loved every minute of it!", said Allan B. Schur

The first activity of the Forum was the Candlelight Ceremony at the Lincoln Memorial. David Hyde Pierce set the tone for the entire Forum when he stated that many people say that America has never been more divided. "Well, tell it to THAT MAN!!" he shouted to us as he dramatically pointed to the sculpture of a seated Lincoln in the Memorial. That theme carried through all of our activities throughout the Forum.

There we all were. More than 600 strong from every corner of the nation. So many things to divide us racially, politically, economically. Of differing backgrounds, of differing religions and denominations. But unified in our determination to end Alzheimer's once and for all and that was enough. So we smiled and greeted strangers who were strangers no more.

We learned through educational and sometimes very entertaining presentations which prepared us for our day "on the Hill" - meeting our Congressmen and staff. And then we were let loose like a swarm of purple-sashed bees buzzing from Congressional office building to Congressional office building and from office to office. We were EVERYWHERE and the staffers noticed. But even tourists noticed.

Students in Washington for school or church sponsored Spring trips knew who we were and what we represented because of the purple "Alzheimer's Association" sashes we wore. And they greeted us with shouts, waves and hugs. They gave us the strength to go from office to office, telling our story and telling our Representatives that we needed them to support us through legislation. So that all of us might see the day when Alzheimer's is defeated. For once and for all.

For more information about the Public Policy Forum, visit the Midlands Chapter [advocacy web page](#).

Respite Care Reimbursement Is Available Through the Midlands Chapter



Respite care reimbursement is available for caregivers of persons with dementia living in Douglas or Sarpy Counties in Nebraska. Make application TODAY by filling out the forms at www.alz.org/midlands or call 402.502.4301 for more information.

Midlands Chapter Hosts 8th Annual Oscar Night Benefit Gala

The Alzheimer's Association Midlands Chapter proved Hollywood had nothing on the Heartland as it hosted its 8th annual **Oscar Night America Dinner and Auction** on March 7 at Harrah's Council Bluffs Casino and Hotel.

Over two hundred guests walked the red carpet, enjoying a night of extraordinary food and celebration. Liveauction packages included a Carnival Cruise for two to Alaska, a specially prepared dinner for four at the French Café followed by Opera Omaha tickets, a Kansas City getaway, and an autographed Husker football. "Vintage Vocalist" **Michael Walker** entertained the guests, taking the audience back to a time when the Rat Pack ruled Las Vegas and crooning was hot.

Tom Hurst and his wife **Kathy Tewhill** spoke poignantly about their experience with Early Onset Alzheimer's Disease, which affects those under the age of 65. They face their own unique burdens, including the potential loss of income as a partner may become unable to work, the lack of Social Security benefits, while continuing to raise their children.

The event chairs were **Dr. William Burke** and his wife **Kate**. Dr. and Mrs. Burke joined **Duane Gross**, President and CEO, to speak about the continued need to provide education, information, support, and care to families affected by dementia, even as work continues toward an eventual cure.



A Special Appeals auction was held, with guests "bidding" in support of educational programs, raising nearly \$9,000! "This was our best year in terms of raising substantial financial resources in support of our mission, as well as in terms of the number of guests who joined us to raise awareness about Alzheimer's disease," said **Duane Gross**, President and CEO.

Oscar Night sponsors included the **University of Nebraska Medical Center Department of Psychiatry, Bozell, Harrah's Casino and Hotel, Great Western Bank, Woodmen of the World, and Methodist Health System**. For more information about Oscar Night or to join the committee for the 2011 Oscar Night, please call Alisha Palagi at 402.502.4301.

Supporting the Midlands Chapter

By Micah Evans, Development Director

The recent release of the [Alzheimer's Association 2010 Facts and Figures](#) underscores what the Midlands Chapter has been reporting for a long time: we're seeing the tsunami of Alzheimer's cases hit our nation as the Baby Boomer generation ages. This can be demonstrated by a simple fact: when I started at the Midlands Chapter in 2007, I received two or three e-mail news articles about Alzheimer's each week. Today, I receive twenty or more articles about Alzheimer's disease each day! There are days when we receive phone calls for care and support all day long!



The Midlands Chapter asks for your help to fulfill our mission. Please support our work. Your gift of any size goes a long way toward having a social worker available for family consultations, educators talking to businesses or community organizations about healthy lifestyles to reduce the risk of Alzheimer's, or to help us continue offering new support groups in your community.

Your support is more important than ever. Won't you please **join the Midlands Chapter to make a difference?**



Demonstrate Your Passion As A Caregiver Support Group Facilitator

The Alzheimer's Association Midlands Chapter in Omaha currently has over 30 Caregiver Support Groups to service 15 counties in northeast Nebraska (Douglas, Sarpy, Dodge, Washington, Burt, Cuming, Wayne, Stanton, Knox, Cedar), and southwest Iowa (Pottawattamie, Shelby, Mills, Harrison, Fremont). There is a growing demand for support groups, so we are actively recruiting for support group facilitators.

What is the purpose of a caregiver support group? The purpose is to provide a safe, non-judgmental setting for caregivers to share experiences, resources, and advice about their challenges with their loved ones who are afflicted with dementia.

What is a caregiver support group facilitator? A facilitator is a volunteer who is fairly knowledgeable about Alzheimer's disease, other dementia, community resources, caregiver stress, and provide useful information during the meetings. She/he is NOT expected to resolve issues, but to listen and guide members in a positive direction with their topic selections.

Who qualifies to become a support group facilitator? Former family caregivers and those in health related professions, such as care and case managers, healthcare professionals, and aging and social services are ideally suited as facilitators.

If you are interested in becoming a caregiver support group facilitator, we would like to talk with you at your earliest convenience. If you know of friends, neighbors, or family members who are interested in becoming active with the Alzheimer's Association Midlands Chapter, please share this opportunity with them. Training is provided upon selection.

Contact Betty K. Chin at 402.502.4301, ext 205 or e-mail Betty at bchin@midlandsalz.org for more details.

Maintain Your Brain

By Rosalie Shepherd, Program Staff

I recently read an article about an American P.O.W. from the Korean War who insisted that extreme loneliness was worse than physical torture and starvation. When he was taken away from the other prisoners and placed in solitary confinement, he was astonished by what he felt.

If you've ever experienced extreme loneliness firsthand, you know that it can be debilitating. According to Dr. Michael Cutler in his Doctor's House Calls, you may not realize that emotions are "energies in motion" and can have a powerful effect on your immune system and other bodily functions.

A revelation of the last decade is that our emotions are as important to our health and longevity as is exercise and food choices. A study from the University of California, School of Medicine published in the journal Genome Biology, show that the emotion of loneliness can be traced to genes linked to the immune system. If you feel alone in this world, you're probably producing fewer cells to fight off bacteria and viruses.

When I talk to high school students about how to maintain their brain health, they are always surprised that our emotions play such a large part in a healthy brain and body. "You mean loneliness can actually kill you?" students will ask. Mounting evidence proves the answer is yes, it can.

Psychologist and biologist Joan Borysenko said, "To be isolated is the greatest tragedy for a human being and the most generic form of stress." Not only can it rob you of your joy, it can literally set you up for serious illnesses that can take your life.

Stay socially engaged in activities that stimulate the mind and body:

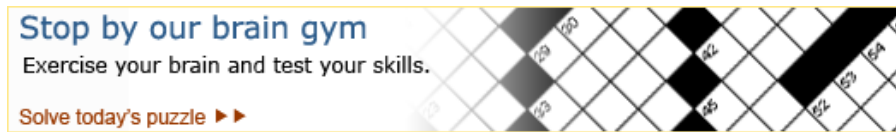
- * Cultivate friendships
- * Visit a shut-in
- * Volunteer in community groups and causes
- * Join bridge clubs, square dancing clubs, or other social groups
- * Travel

There is an Irish saying: "People live in each other's shelter." No doubt, we humans are wired to need each other, and evidence shows the negative effects of isolation and loneliness on body and spirit.

Join Us On



Stay up-to-date with the latest events and activities at the Midlands Chapter! Follow us on [Facebook](#) or [LinkedIn](#) TODAY!!



Vision

A world without Alzheimer's disease.

Mission

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.

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