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## **UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA ALZHEIMER RESEARCHER LEAVES THE LAB AND TAKES TO THE ROAD IN THE FIRST ALZHEIMER'S BREAKTHROUGH RIDE<sup>SM</sup>**

*More Than 55 Researchers Cycling Cross-Country Segments,  
Securing 50,000 Signatures Urging Lawmakers to  
Make Alzheimer's Disease a National Priority*

**Minneapolis, MN, July 10, 2010** – Beginning on July 17, Alzheimer's disease researchers participating in the Alzheimer's Breakthrough Ride<sup>SM</sup> will cycle cross-country segments, starting in San Francisco and ending in Washington, D.C. On August 31, Michael A. Walters, PhD, with the University of Minnesota, will cycle from Madison to Chicago (147 miles) as the Breakthrough Riders pedal toward their goal to collect 50,000 signatures for a petition urging lawmakers to make Alzheimer's disease a national priority. Riders will present the signatures to Congress on World Alzheimer's Day (September 21).

As Americans continue to live longer, Alzheimer's is quickly becoming the public health crisis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Today, an estimated 5.3 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's and as many 16 million will have it by 2050. This year, the total annual costs of care for people with Alzheimer's will be \$172 billion and this will rise to more than \$1 trillion by the mid-century, with Medicare costs soaring more than 600 percent and Medicaid costs increasing 400 percent. In Minnesota, over 97,000 people have Alzheimer's disease. Additionally, there are over 196,000 caregivers in Minnesota who provide near 224 million hours of unpaid care to people with Alzheimer's disease – valuing over \$2.5 billion. As the numbers suggest, Minnesota and the nation simply cannot afford an Alzheimer epidemic. The researchers cycling in the Alzheimer's Breakthrough Ride have made stopping Alzheimer's disease their life's work, but they can't do it alone.

"I'm participating in the ride because it is important that scientists help raise awareness at a national level about the debilitating effects of this disease," said Dr. Walters. "I am hoping that by participating in this ride I will be able to help others support the Alzheimer's Association in their push for passage of the Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act, which authorizes a significant increase in funding for Alzheimer's research at the National Institutes of Health."

The Alzheimer's Breakthrough Ride was originally conceived by Alzheimer's disease researcher Bruce Lamb, PhD. During a casual bike ride last summer, Dr. Lamb pondered the difficulties in getting adequate federal funding for Alzheimer research and became convinced that researchers needed to do even more to fight the disease. He shared the idea of a cross-country bike ride to build support for Alzheimer's with the Alzheimer's Association, and now researchers across the country are heading out on the open road. More than 55 riders will travel approximately 4,500 miles through 13 states and 65 congressional districts. Before ending in the nation's capital, the Alzheimer's Breakthrough Ride will cross California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

According to the Alzheimer's Association *2010 Alzheimer's Disease Facts & Figures*:

- Alzheimer's disease is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States.
- From 2000 to 2006, deaths from Alzheimer's disease increased by 46.1 percent. Deaths from heart disease decreased by 11.1 percent, breast cancer deaths decreased by 2.6 percent, prostate cancer deaths decreased by 8.7 percent, stroke deaths decreased by 18.2 percent and HIV/AIDS deaths decreased by 16.3 percent.
- In 2009, nearly 11 million American family members and friends provided care for a person with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia. These caregivers provided 12.5 billion hours of unpaid care valued at \$144 billion – more than the federal government spends on Medicare and Medicaid combined for people with Alzheimer's and other dementias.
- Average per person Medicaid payments were 9 times higher; Medicare payments were 3 times higher, and private insurance payments were 26 percent higher for those with Alzheimer's and other dementias compared to those without these conditions.

As the Alzheimer's Breakthrough Riders cycle from the west coast to Capitol Hill, Americans are invited to get involved by signing the online petition to make Alzheimer's disease a national priority or coming out to one of 17 signing events along the route. To find an event in your area, follow the riders and sign the online petition, visit [www.alz.org/breakthroughride](http://www.alz.org/breakthroughride).

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](http://www.alz.org).

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