



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

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ANNUAL MEDICARE TRUSTEES REPORT - *Alzheimer's Association Statement* -

The Medicare Trustees Report makes it clear that we must act quickly to stave off unsustainable costs to Medicare. We must take the necessary steps now to protect Medicare for future generations. In just two short years, the first wave of baby boomers becomes eligible for Medicare. According to the recent Alzheimer's Association's® *2009 Facts and Figures Report*, Medicare currently spends three times more for people with Alzheimer's and other dementias than for other Americans age 65 and older.

Today there are 5.3 million Americans living with Alzheimer's and as many as 16 million will have the disease by mid-century. As the nation's lawmakers contend with the best way to reform the country's health care system – Medicare is front and center. With an emerging baby boomer generation at higher risk for developing the disease, there is no clearer public health crisis or threat to Medicare than Alzheimer's disease.

Connecting the dots is simple. Controlling soaring Medicare costs is fundamental to getting the nation's fiscal health back on track. The impact of growing number of people with Alzheimer's on these costs is a clear obstacle to this objective. The nation is facing unprecedented economic challenges. The potential insolvency of Medicare in just eight years makes finding effective treatments to end or delay the progression of Alzheimer's even more urgent - especially with 10 million baby boomers at risk to develop the disease.

The most significant way to reduce Medicare costs now and in the future is to immediately increase the investment in federally-funded medical Alzheimer research. For the last several years, government funding for Alzheimer research has been woefully inadequate, especially considering the ballooning impact the disease will continue to have on Medicare.

Accelerating research would be a most prudent investment of federal dollars – for millions of retiring baby boomers, and for the viability of Medicare trust funds. Effective treatments for Alzheimer's can save millions of lives and billions of dollars for Medicare and the latest Medicare Trustees Report underscores the fact that we must act today.

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