



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
P. O. BOX 3378  
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:  
File:

November 2014

Dear Colleague:

According to the Alzheimer's Association, Hawaii has approximately 25,000 residents age 65 and over who are living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. By 2025, this number is projected to grow to 35,000, an increase of 40%. Dementia is considered a public health crisis by world and national organizations, and the importance of having a public health approach to addressing it is crucial.

The number of people in Hawaii with Alzheimer's disease is likely underrepresented due to the lack of early detection/diagnosis and under-reporting. The Department of Health (DOH) strongly urges health care personnel to consider the importance of early detection/diagnosis of cognitive impairment and dementia. There are numerous benefits of early detection/diagnosis:

- Symptoms of some dementias can be reversed;
- Increased treatment options and access to information, services, and support;
- Advance planning for health, housing, finance and care and risk reduction;
- Option to participate in clinical trials recruiting individuals in the early stages of dementia;
- Relief gained from better understanding by patients and caregivers;
- Better overall health outcomes; and
- Reduced health care costs.

DOH highly recommends that healthcare professionals:

1. Understand the benefits of early and accurate diagnosis.
2. Familiarize yourself with the Alzheimer's Association's Ten Warning Signs of Dementia: [http://www.alz.org/alzheimers\\_disease\\_10\\_signs\\_of\\_alzheimers.asp](http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_10_signs_of_alzheimers.asp).
3. Promote the advantages of the Annual Medicare Wellness Visit. This yearly Medicare benefit, which was initiated in January 2011 as part of the Affordable Care Act, includes the creation of a personalized prevention plan and detection of possible cognitive impairment. This can be a first step in a thorough process of evaluation, with referral to specialists for further assessment to determine the cause of the memory loss. Please visit <http://www.alz.org/national/documents/2012annualwellnessvisit.pdf> for more information about this Medicare benefit.

4. Refer patients with signs of memory loss to the Alzheimer's Association – Aloha Chapter because they offer statewide support services and education for those with memory loss and their caregivers. Their toll-free 24/7 Helpline is 1-800-272-3900.
5. Attend dementia trainings for healthcare professionals. As a result of the recommendations/strategies from *Hawaii 2025: State Plan on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias*, available at <http://www.hawaiiadrc.org/site/439/resources.aspx>, the Hawaii Executive Office on Aging and JABSOM's Geriatric Education Center have partnered to offer dementia trainings; we urge you to attend as the trainings become available statewide.

In closing, I want to reiterate the importance of assessing for cognitive impairment. DOH continues to work with local and national organizations to promote awareness of Alzheimer's disease and make strides toward finding a prevention or cure while providing support for the many individuals and families affected by this disease.

For more information about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, visit the Alzheimer's Association website at [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org), which includes the latest publication of the 2014 Alzheimer's Facts & Figures. Additionally, please visit the new federal government website with comprehensive information at <http://www.alzheimers.gov>.

Thank you for working with us to promote the health and well-being of all Hawaii residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Linda Rosen" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Linda Rosen, M.D., M.P.H.  
Director of Health