Driving and Dementia

John Adair, MD

Dementia of any type prevents people from conducting all manner of self-maintenance functions. With progression, even basic self-care duties become neglected or improperly executed. This disruption can cause distress for patients and their families, some problems in daily function can actually endanger patients as well as others.

The most common “dangerous” activity most people perform regularly in our society relates to operating motor vehicles. Whether we recognize it or not, driving a car is a very complex and dynamic mental process. Individuals who drive must be able to understand the meaning of symbols and signs and have quick judgment for obstacles (e.g., pedestrians & other vehicles). Memory is also continuously taxed as a driver reconstructs the sequence of turns and directions from where they are to where they want to be. Like other complex functions such as cooking, dementia of any type can be expected to corrupt one’s ability to carry out the skills involved in driving competently.

A restrictive approach is certainly the safest solution and, all other things being equal, is the one many physicians prefer. But all other things are not equal. For example, asking a dementia patient’s husband or wife to drive may not reduce risk if that person suffers from for example, poor vision. Driving restrictions will least impede a patient’s independence if viable transportation alternatives exist, a situation that does not pertain to many parts of our state. Even in Albuquerque, the public transportation system (i.e., buses) is less than ideal. Hence, physicians must carefully consider the impact of the restrictive approach, suitable for a “perfect world”, on patients who live in the real world.

Each state establishes rules about driving and the variation in laws across the country is truly dismaying. For better or worse, New Mexico’s statutes are relatively ambiguous. One section of the law says, “The division shall not issue a driver’s license…to any person…who is suffering from any mental disability or disease which would render him unable to drive a motor vehicle with safety…”. Note that this applies only to those applying for a driver’s license, though our state helps somewhat by asking people over the age of 75 to renew their license yearly. Taking away a privilege that someone already possesses refers to different sections of the same law:

66-5-30. Authority of division to suspend or revoke license. (2003)
A. The division is authorized to suspend the…driver’s license…of a driver without preliminary hearing upon a showing by its records or other sufficient evidence…that the licensee:
(3) has been convicted with such frequency of offenses against traffic laws or rules governing motor vehicles as to indicate a disrespect for traffic laws and a disregard for the safety of other persons on the highways;
(4) is an habitually reckless or negligent driver of a motor vehicle;
(5) is incompetent to drive a motor vehicle.

Enforcing driving restrictions remains easier said than done. All efforts of caregivers, including revoking a patient’s license, amount to nothing if patients insist on driving and retain the means for doing so. Motivation to drive may be modified through appeals to a patient’s reason, most effectively delivered by physicians rather than family members. One of my mentors told his patients, “It doesn’t help you if I tell you not to drive after you’ve had an accident”. If individuals won’t consider safety issues, I try explaining potential economic consequences: even when an accident is not a patient’s fault, insurance companies may use their condition to deny coverage for claims.

continued on page 10
President’s Message
Quentin C. Florence, PharmD

This is my last message as President of the NM Alzheimer’s Association. My term expires in June. We have selected a new slate of officers and new board members, who will take office in June and I’m looking forward to working with them.

I thank everyone who has helped me, individual names are far too numerous to individually mention, but Thank You All!!

The board terms of Janice Freeland, John Adair, and Elaine Luna are expiring this June. We will greatly miss your leadership, involvement, insight, and efforts. Thank you.

I can hardly believe that it has been four years since I became President of our association. In 2001, when I became President, there were an estimated 28,000 individuals with Alzheimer’s and related dementias in New Mexico, today there are 35,000.

We have developed some treatments, better care methods, improved diagnostic abilities, and more understanding for caregiver issues. However; the fact still remains, that we don’t know what causes Alzheimer’s Disease, how to prevent it, or how to cure it. We now have some ideas that we didn’t have four years ago, but just ideas and theories. It’s essential that money for research is greatly increased, imagine in four more years when we are caring for 40,000 or ten more years when we’ll care for 50,000. We must increase public awareness, community knowledge, and educate public policy decision-makers about the needs of persons with Alzheimer’s disease, other dementias, and their families.

The New Mexico Chapter of The Alzheimer’s Association was started in 1981, it was then known as “The Albuquerque Chapter”. In 1998 the Las Cruces branch office was opened and our first branch office coordinator was hired then we became “The New Mexico Chapter”. Since that time branch offices have been established in Las Vegas, Roswell, Farmington, and a Public Policy coordinator position in Santa Fe.

Our most recent Strategic Plan for the Association has as one goal, “to ensure that our leadership reflects the unique character of our service area”. I think this has been accomplished; we now have board members from all areas of the state, Farmington to Hobbs, and Las Cruces to Las Vegas.

It’s important to have these local branch offices, local community advisory boards, and especially local State Board of Director members. Now we can truly say we are “The New Mexico Chapter”.

Once again thank you to all who have worked so hard in making the New Mexico Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association what it is today and what it will become.

Tim

If you tell the truth you don’t have to remember anything. ---Mark Twain

New Board Member - Velma Arellano

My name is Velma Arellano; I am a native of Questa, a small town just north of Taos. I earned Bachelor’s degrees in Mass Communications and Spanish and a Master’s in Psychology/Guidance and Counseling from New Mexico Highlands University. I have a life time of experience with the elderly; my grandfather raised me and was 100 years old when he succumbed not long ago. I am approaching 15 years of experience in Long Term Care in Santa Fe.

I have worked with independent senior living, nursing home, assisted living and end of life. My professional calling has evolved into being an advocate for Alzheimer’s victims and their families and I love it!

I am currently Executive Director at Sierra Vista in Santa Fe, a residential program for Alzheimer’s. Within the last seven years I have been actively promoting Alzheimer’s awareness through various media and hosting Alzheimer’s support groups. One highlight was being featured on NBC’s Today Show during the promotion of Maria Shriver’s book entitled, “What’s Happening to Grandpa?”

Abraham Lincoln once said, “I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. I like to see a man live so his place will be proud of him”. My biggest reward has been being involved in a home in which Alzheimer’s victims can be loved.
As we go to press for the newsletter, we are happy to report that 67 corporate sponsors have donated nearly $57,000 to support this year’s Memory Walk. We are delighted with this support and know it goes a long way towards our goal of $125,000. But, we need TEAMS.

Memory Walk TEAMS are the lifeblood of the program. We have set a goal of 50 Teams this year. TEAMS generally include at least 10 members and individuals are asked to raise at least $200. It is so easy this year. You can register online and donate through KINTERA. Take a look at the incentive items available – also online – through Summit Marketing. Just go to www.nm-alzheimers.org and click on the Memory Walk logo.

KASA 2 Fox – our Media sponsor will be broadcasting Memory Walk 06 reminders beginning June 1. The Albuquerque Journal supports the Walk with special ads during June. Thousands of dollars in in-kind support have been raised throughout the Albuquerque area to help make the Walk a success.

Memory Walk is the largest and most visible fundraiser for the Alzheimer’s Association. Join the Walk that millions remember.
Meet the New Staff

Betty Lewis Kuehne

For the past 15 years Betty Lewis Kuehne has worked in nursing homes in Belen and Socorro, both private and not-for-profit. She served as the social services director and admission coordinator in both facilities, dealing with families and residents. She also coordinated Alzheimer’s activities in both communities, fundraising and enlisting community support for outlying walks. Giving out information, talking about research, disease process, behavior redirection, and family stress from forgetfulness are focal points in what she considers her ministry. During this time she accomplished an MA in Christian Ministry, graduating Magna Cum Laude from Albuquerque Bible College in 2002.

Community service includes being a member of the Pilot Club of Belen for 13 years, currently serving as President; secretary to the Board of Elders and Deacons for the Chihuahua Bible Chapel in Veguita, NM, for the last 10 years; a member of the Board of Directors for Socorro Mental Health for the last 4 years. She also works with animal rescue groups and the BLM Wild Mustang program.

She has a BA from the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York. It is an interdepartmental degree in Economics and Health Care Administration. She has also been affiliated with the American Academy of Bereavement Counselors.

Carole C. Sullivan

Carole was most recently the Chief Development Officer of the Arlington County Chapter of the American Red Cross in Arlington, Virginia.

Prior to this appointment, Carole was the Executive Director of the Arlington Arts Center from 1995 to 2003. The Arlington Arts Center is a 29-year old institution, with an active exhibition schedule, popular artistic programming, and studios for 14 visual artists. She was responsible for administering all aspects of arts center operations and also functioned as the facility manager for the building. As a part of this endeavor, she successfully administered a $3.2M capital campaign. Carole also free-lances as an arts management/arts education consultant.

Carole worked at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. from 1976 to 1993. She produced over 100 plays and events for young audiences at the Kennedy Center. Having founded Theater for Young People and the Imagination Celebration, she also worked with educators and school systems on teacher training, education materials, and in-school programs. Carole also worked as the theater manager, overseeing box office and front of house operations as well as union negotiations.

An experienced actor and director, Carole has taught drama and improvisation to children and adults in a variety of settings. She holds a master’s degree in Theatre from the University of Maryland, did graduate work at the University of Washington in Seattle, and has a bachelor’s degree in Speech/Drama/English from the University of Kansas.

Those attending the Memory Walk Kick-Off Breakfast were given information on being a team captain for the Walk & enjoyed the hospitality of the Woodmark. Thank you Woodmark!
Roswell Convention Center
June 22, 2006
4:00-9:00 p.m.

“JUSTICE FOR ALL”

Cyril H. Wecht, M.D., J.D., an internationally acclaimed forensic expert and medical-legal consultant, will lecture on the “Role of Forensic Science in the Evolution of Criminal Justice Reform in the United States.” He will also discuss elder abuse, medical malpractice, and the future role of forensic nursing. Dr. Wecht recently assisted with the autopsy evidence of those left behind in the nursing homes in the wake of hurricane Katrina. He has also consulted on high profile and notorious cases such as Iraqi Prisoner Deaths, The Waco Branch Davidian Fire, O.J. Simpson, JonBenet Ramsey, Mary Jo Kopechne, Jean Harris, and Sunny von Bulow.

“PEOPLE, PASSION, PLEASURE”

Gary “Mex” Glazner, founder of the Alzheimer’s Poetry Project, will present APP research on the effects of reading poetry to those afflicted with dementia and how this sparks memories from their past. The idea is simple: read classic poems to loved ones that they might have learned as children. This activity helps to stimulate memories and provides enjoyment for both the caregivers and people afflicted with dementia. “NBC’s Today” show and “NPR’s Weekend Edition”, have featured segments of APP.

“The biggest surprise to me has been the humor patients have,” Glazner said. “One retired army sergeant gives me thumbs down if he doesn’t like something or, if the poem is sad he’ll play the air violin. Some patients will chime in with the words to Poe’s poem The Raven or vocalize Yankee Doodle Dandy.”

Tickets for this event are $50, including a prime rib dinner.

Proceeds stay in New Mexico to benefit families coping with the devastating effects of Alzheimer's disease.

Your support and contributions are greatly appreciated.

For Tickets and Details Contact:
New Mexico Alzheimer's Association - NM Chapter
1-800-777-8155
Roswell Branch Office
505-625-2254
or
Roswell Chamber of Commerce
or
Hastings Book Store - Roswell

You may register by mail or fax and pick up your tickets at the door.

If you would like to display a corporate/business booth at the benefit, please call for details.
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She is committed to donate a generous portion of her Real Estate commission to the NM Alzheimer’s Association whenever you mention this ad!

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4645 Pitt NE  
Barbara M. 266-4473

Call for Details  
1st Saturday 1:00 PM  
Erna Ferguson Library  
Community Room  
3700 San Mateo Blvd. NE  
Virginia/Betty 294-7969

3rd Monday @ 5:30 PM  
Sunrise Assisted Living  
4910 Tramway Ridge Dr.  
Vanessa J. 271-4900

* Indicates monthly  
Educational Program

** One reason people get divorced is that they run out of gift ideas. ---Robert Byrne

The years between 50 and 70 are the hardest. You are always asked to do things, and you are not yet decrepit enough to turn them down. --- T. S. Eliot

One reason people get divorced is that they run out of gift ideas. ---Robert Byrne
Thank you for remembering...

Memorials & Honorariums

AUNT SKINNY
Vera Youree
MARIE AUSTIN
Thelma Gillham
JANE BARKER
Carolyn Blitch
Ted & Jackie DeHart
Helen Menefee
Bob & Debbie Sonnamaker
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Joel Nash
Sue Warren DuBroff
Barbara & Walter Winslow

- Thank you - Gracias - Thank you - Gracias - Thank you -
Executive Director's Message

There are some new faces in the Albuquerque office… Please join me in welcoming our new Program Director, Betty Kuehne and our new Development Director, Carole Sullivan. Betty is a long time volunteer, having coordinated the Socorro support group and annual Memory Walk for a number of years. Carole is recently relocated from Arlington, Virginia and has several years of successful development and management experience. She has hit the ground running to coordinate the 13th Annual Albuquerque walk.

The Memory Walk – scheduled for June 24th at Milne Stadium in Albuquerque has broken its corporate sponsorship goal and raised almost $59,000 in sponsorship funds to date. But we’re not finished yet… our next hurdle is the goal of 60 teams for the Thirteenth Annual Walk. Currently the Team Recruitment Chairs, Beth Altherr and Melissa Spiers with support from the Memory Walk Committee, volunteers and staff have recruited just shy of forty teams. As I write this, we have about six weeks to recruit another twenty plus Memory Walk teams and meet our goal of sixty.

A team may be anywhere from two people to 100 or more who organize and raise money in support of the walk. In addition to the satisfaction derived from knowing you are walking for a good cause – funding the support and services provided by the New Mexico Chapter to caregivers and families – there are the additional benefits provided in the form of exciting incentive items and we make it easier then ever for you to register for the walk, meet and surpass your Memory Walk goal.

Go to our chapter website and click on Memory Walk or go directly to our online Memory Walk individual and team registration site… http://www.kintera.org/faf/home/default.asp?ievent=161142%20

You can register for the walk, recruit team members and easily build your own site to raise funds for the walk.

Remember, the Memory Walk is the largest fundraiser in the state for Alzheimer’s disease and dementia programming and all the funds stay local to assist the 34,000 New Mexicans with the disease, their caregivers and family members.

Looking forward to walking with you on the 24th of June.

Interested in saving mailing costs and paper by receiving the New Mexico Chapter Newsletter electronically?

Please email Maralie Waterman BeLonge in the Albuquerque office at maralie.waterman-belenge@alz.org with the email address where you would like the newsletter sent.

Thank you for supporting the Mother’s Day Lavender Event.
We hope your loved one is enjoying it.
Branch News

NORTHEASTERN BRANCH
Linda Durant – Branch Coordinator

Summer is on the way in the high country and with it we are busy planning our Memory Walks, Events and Fundraiser. On September 9th the Las Vegas Memory Walk/Grandparents Day BBQ Celebration will be held at the El Fidel Hotel on Grand Ave. We will be on patio so if you are unable to walk plan on staying and help support our worthy cause. If you can, join us as we walk down Douglas to make people more aware of Alzheimer’s. We will be honoring and remembering our loved ones and grandparents that day, so bring every one! We will have door prizes, a raffle, silent auction children’s arts & crafts and a great BBQ – please join us. In October we will be hosting similar events in Raton and in Tucumcari, keep watching for updates in your area. Remember there is no fee to walk or join in our Memory Walk events. We will have our one of a kind 2006 Alzheimer’s T-shirts available too.

Please remember that the funds raised in our area go toward supporting your branch office so we can serve those suffering from Alzheimer’s and other dementias as well as caregivers, families, friends and supporters. We also provide information, education, training and host groups.

Right now your help is greatly needed so please become a part of our Branch Office support team. Help us help all those needing our services by becoming a volunteer, sponsor, and team captain or team supporter for the Memory Walk Fundraiser and/or Events. For more information call Linda (505) 426-9840.

SOUTHWESTERN BRANCH
Cathy Murphy – Branch Coordinator

With our successful Gala and the May 4th Caregiver’s Conference “Memory Loss: The Challenges and the Blessings” behind us we are now focusing on our upcoming Golf Tournament in August and Memory Walk on October 14th.

Jan Wimsatt, our Conference chair did an exceptional job of organizing and implementing the many aspects of a successful conference. Jan has been on our board for almost 9 years and she still has such a passion for her work with senior adults.

The conference presenters were awesome and the participants receptive and eager to learn new ways of coping, creative and imaginative ways of dealing with behavior problems, as well as, the humorous side of those who felt laughter was a key part of keeping sane in these trying times.

Don Murphy, a new board member and the 2006 Memory Walk Chairman. The theme for this year’s walk will be “A Family Affair” and will be held at Young Park. This year we will feature many different aspects of the walk being family oriented and kid friendly. Watch for more details.

In addition to Don Murphy, we are please to welcome new board members Donna Ramzy with the Village at Northrise-Desert Willows and Patsy Medina, who along with Don are with Cottonbloom ASL & Memory Care Community.

We are also delighted to have Rita Martinez on board. She is from the Senior Employment Program and works 20 hours a week. She is also working with Mary Lacy developing a new Spanish Support Group.

Have a great summer!!!

Driving and Dementia

continued from Page 1

Some patients respond to a simple letter from their physician “reminding” them why they should not drive. When logic fails, the formal driving evaluation mentioned above may confront the patient with their shortcomings. A driving evaluation puts a person behind a foreign wheel in a novel environment and, in this context, they may fail the most basic steps (e.g., finding the ignition). When driving motivation cannot be modified, caregivers are obligated to preclude the means. Such measures include preventing access to car keys, a situation facilitated when patients “lose” their keys. Other families disable a patient’s car by disconnecting the battery or removing the distributor cap. Another approach might entail selling the patient’s car – a maneuver that may require legal arrangements (i.e., power of attorney) – or giving it to a relative or donating it to a charity. This approach is effective only if patients cannot buy another vehicle.

The complex issue of driving safety will continue to grow in importance as the population ages. In the meantime, preparing for the time when patients can no longer drive should be part of the initial “brainstorming” families should do as they consider other long-term plans to keep patients safe even when not sound.
We Need You!

Yes, we need you and more volunteers. We would appreciate it if you could bring someone with you the next time you are here. Do you know someone that has a little bit of time or a lot of time to help a very deserving cause? If so, please introduce them to us.

YES! I am interested in being a volunteer. Name: ________________________________________________________

Call me @________________________ or my cell # is __________________________________

The New Mexico Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association is continually updating its mailing list. If you have an address change or some other correction for our mailing list, please complete the following form (please print or type) and return this form to us.

Name: ________________________________________________________

Address: _________________________________________________________________________

City: ______________________________________ State:  ________ Zip Code: ______________

My e-mail address is: ______________________________________________________________

Please update your mailing list. Please remove me from your mailing list. Please add me to your mailing list.

Yes! I want to help the New Mexico Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association.

Please use my gift to help those afflicted with Alzheimer’s disease and other related disorders in New Mexico.

I’m enclosing my tax deductible contribution of ___$25 ___$50 ___$100 ___$250 ___$500 or $ ________$

(Make checks payable to: Alzheimer’s Association.)

Please accept my donation by using the following account information and signature.

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Send your gift to: Alzheimer’s Association

9500 Montgomery NE

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Albuquerque, NM  87111

Your Donation Is Tax Deductible.

Thank you for your generous support & donations. We can’t do it without you!

You make it possible!

Thank you for your contribution to this newsletter.

John Adair, MD  Kathy Bolkovac  Randi Duran
Linda Durant  Pat Florence  Quentin Florence, PharmD
Cheryl Marlow  Cathy Murphy  Carole Sullivan
Maralie Waterman BeLonge

What would YOU like to see in the newsletter?

Let us know.

Contact Randi at (505) 266-4473 or randi.duran@alz.org
LIZZIE INVITES YOU TO JOIN HER FOR MEMORY WALK 2006

Register Online Today!
www.nm-alzheimers.org
Call (505) 266-4473

COME WALK WITH US