We Walk to End Alzheimer’s.
Our 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.

Our Vision

A world without Alzheimer’s disease.
I am a practical person. At my age, I don’t have a particular use for dreams. I am not going to be an astronaut. Thinking about being a cowboy makes my back hurt. The longer I’m in banking, the less likely I’ll be lead singer in a rock band.

There are times, still, when I am reminded of the value of dreaming. “A world without Alzheimer’s,” is our collective vision. While we use the word, “vision,” I must admit that, over the years, this has seemed more like a dream. It has appeared, at various times, as a thing so distant, it might never become real.

My heart swells as I write to you, that this is no longer the case. While years can pass without perceptible progress toward a dream, events sometimes happen in a rush. A stunning amount has been accomplished in the six months since our last correspondence.

The National Alzheimer’s Plan was unveiled in May. Tragic as it is that the Alzheimer’s landscape cannot be altered overnight, this is a potentially game-changing document, improving care today and devoting funding to Alzheimer’s research, with the stated goal of effectively treating and preventing Alzheimer’s by 2025.

Here in New Mexico, groundbreaking legislation passed this February created a State Alzheimer’s Task Force, which will deliver a state Alzheimer’s Plan to the Governor’s desk by November of 2013. Throughout our society, Alzheimer’s has suddenly become a priority.

You are the reason. More than five million Americans have Alzheimer’s disease. The current level of national effort has been requested for years, but your voices have become impossible to ignore.

You have petitioned. You have written, called and visited your legislators. And you have walked.

Each September, we gather together for the Walk to End Alzheimer’s. By doing so, we remind each other that, in this often lonely journey, no one is alone. We remind ourselves of the loved ones we have lost. We remind policy makers that the fight against Alzheimer’s can’t wait.

If you are reading this newsletter, you’re probably aware of the incredible resources our Alzheimer’s Association, New Mexico Chapter staff and volunteers provide. Statewide Savvy Caregiver classes equip loved ones to effectively deal with the trials of Alzheimer’s. Support groups create a space to share experiences, information and resources. The 24-7 Helpline answers in times of crisis or uncertainty. Statewide care consultations answer questions and set future plans. Project Lifesaver safeguards against wandering. Public policy efforts ensure our lawmakers are aware of the broadening scope of this devastating disease.

You make all of this possible through the Walk to End Alzheimer’s. This year has seen so many promising beginnings but, without follow through, they could be just that. To ensure that the National Alzheimer’s Plan is adopted and funded, to be certain New Mexico develops and passes a strong state plan, to guarantee caregivers and those with the disease receive the supports they deserve, we must continue to be seen and heard.

This September, we have an opportunity to come together in a way that cannot be ignored. Be sure your friends know how important this is. Please join us at the Walk and, together, we’ll continue our quickening march to a world without Alzheimer’s.
Alzheimer’s Advocates see record progress

Alzheimer’s disease has no regard for position or power, and New Mexico Governor Susana Martinez is well familiar. Her father has the disease.

“He knows me, not as his daughter, but he knows me as the nice lady who takes care of his disabled daughter (Martinez’s sister, Lettie),” Martinez said. “He doesn’t know my brother as his son, but he knows him as the nice man who helps take care of him.”

In the article, she acknowledged her great love for the State of New Mexico and her role as Governor as reasons for not desiring the post. I was struck by the fact that one of her most important reasons for removing her name from contention is that she is a family caregiver. Her devotion to those in her family that she cares for is touching and something that we hear repeated everyday in our work at the Association. Whether they are Governor of New Mexico, or a banker, trust officer, coach, teacher or fast food worker, family caregivers across this state and our nation have to make the very difficult decision to cut back on hours or pass up promotions so that they can effectively care for a family member. Caregiving takes a toll—financially and physically. This is why we need your help. As you read this newsletter please, think about a family caregiver who might need respite or training, and encourage them to register for our Respite Program and our Savvy Caregiver class. Encourage them to join us on November 3, 2012 for our 8th annual Family Caregiver Conference at Sandia Resort. If you have already walked in their shoes, please join us for our Walk to End Alzheimer's and walk in support of those who are currently in a caregiving role. If you are currently a caregiver, please seek support and training. We are here to help.
Martinez’s words were part of a tearfully-poignant address delivered in the Roundhouse Rotunda during February’s Alzheimer’s Day at the New Mexico State Legislature.

The occasion indicated New Mexico’s highest-ranking government officials share the personal heartbreak of the disease at a rate consistent with Alzheimer’s epidemic impact. Thirteen New Mexico state legislators, Secretary of Health, Dr. Catherine Torres and Secretary of the Department of Aging and Long Term Services Retta Ward, took the podium, with each sharing their perspective on a disease which affects 38,000 New Mexicans and their 103,000 caregivers.

At both the state and federal levels, 2012 saw a record amount of legislative attention devoted to Alzheimer’s disease. Without a single dissenting vote, New Mexico’s State House of Representatives passed House Memorial 20, creating for the first time a state Alzheimer’s task force with a November, 2013 deadline for submitting a plan to deal with Alzheimer’s disease to the Governor’s office. Introduced by longtime public health advocate New Mexico State Representative Danice Picraux, the Memorial’s landslide approval echoed the unanimous U.S. Congressional passage of the National Alzheimer’s Project Act (NAPA) in 2011.

New Mexico’s Alzheimer’s concerns were also evident in the U.S. Congress, where Representatives Ben Ray Lujan and Martin Heinrich became cosponsors of the HOPE Act, which focuses on improving diagnosis of Alzheimer’s and on connecting caregivers and recipients with resources and supports. Heinrich also became the first New Mexican to cosponsor the Breakthrough Act, which would make Alzheimer’s research a top priority for the National Institute of Health.

The National Alzheimer’s Task Force, created with last year’s passage of NAPA, released a National Alzheimer’s Plan which Alzheimer’s Association president Harry Johns lauded as, “a strong plan that promises important progress.”

With a stated goal of preventing and effectively treating Alzheimer’s disease by 2025, the plan addresses research, care, individual and family support, public awareness and data collection in a manner which is more comprehensive and aggressive than any prior government action.

Promising as this is, Alzheimer’s advocates face the challenge of securing legislative approval and funding for this plan in what promises to be a continually contentious political climate. Those pushing for such approval should be heartened by the fact that, at a time when politicians seem to agree on little, support for some Alzheimer’s legislation has been unanimous.
Dear Feeling frazzled,

My mother was diagnosed with dementia four years ago. A year later, my father passed away and subsequently, my husband and I moved her in with us. This arrangement seemed fine for the first year and a half, but in the last 18 months my mom’s behavior has become very difficult to deal with. She will fixate on things like her checking account balance, and then obsessively ask about it 10 or 15 times a day. She will also follow me everywhere I go—she even tries to follow me into the bathroom! My husband has told me that my mom’s behavior hasn’t really changed as drastically as it seems to me, and that the stress of taking care of her is affecting my patience and objectivity. I know that this is at least partially true, but I’m not sure what I can do to stop being so frustrated. Where can I find more patience?

- Feeling frazzled

Dear Feeling frazzled,

The first thing I would like to point out is that your situation is very common and you are not alone. In fact, statistics show that in 2011, there were 104,833 dementia caregivers in New Mexico. Those caregivers provided an estimated 119 million hours of unpaid care that same year. Dementia caregivers are twice as likely as other caregivers to develop physical and emotional problems. They are more than twice as likely to require medication for emotional problems like anxiety and depression. And they are only half as likely as other caregivers to utilize their own health care. With numbers like that, it’s only natural that you and the other 104,832 caregivers out there will feel, overwhelmed, stressed out and just plain impatient at times. We can discuss some strategies for coping with these feelings, but first, give yourself credit and a huge pat on the back for all the things you do right!

In order to replenish our supplies of patience, we have to understand where impatience comes from. There are probably many causes of impatience, but I believe that they can all be boiled down to a simple root cause: not unmet expectations. Whether the perceived shortcomings are ours or another’s, when we expect things to go a certain way and they don’t, we become impatient. If our expectations are unrealistic, then we set ourselves up to be disappointed and impatient more often than usual. Some typical examples of unrealistic expectations that caregivers have are:

- “My mom should know she’s okay if I am just in the other room for a minute.” The reality is that caregivers often represent safety and security to the person with dementia. If the caregiver appears unavailable, that sense of security is threatened.
- “If I can just figure out how to explain this the right way, my mom will ‘get it’ and stop asking me the same question over and over.” A person with dementia may not have the capacity to understand a reasonable explanation and even if they do, they may not remember the explanation you gave. The reality is you might have to reassure your loved one many times throughout the day.
- “I shouldn’t lose patience with my mom.” As a dementia caregiver, you are tasked with one of the most
difficult jobs there is. Despite your best intentions, at the end of the day, you are human and subject to all the same emotions as the rest of humanity.

**So, how do we better align our expectations with reality?**

The first, most important and probably most difficult skill to develop is self-care. **Respite** is a critical self-care tool for the dementia caregiver. Giving yourself breaks (even small ones) is key to maintaining your perspective, and to providing the highest quality care possible. For a variety of reasons, many caregivers believe that respite is not an option available to them. I acknowledge that building respite into a regular routine can take some effort, but deciding to make it a priority in your life goes a long way towards minimizing some of the impatience that caregivers experience. For 10 ideas for a quality respite experience see page 13. The Alzheimer’s Association New Mexico chapter offers a **respite reimbursement** program to family caregivers throughout the state. Once registered with the program, caregivers are eligible to receive up to $300 a year to help defray some of the costs associated with respite care. Eligibility is not based on income; the only requirements are that the care recipient be diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia, and they must live at the same address as the registered caregiver. Registered caregivers are also eligible for an once-in-a-lifetime emergency respite benefit of up to $1000. You may contact the Alzheimer’s Association for more information, or to have an application sent to you.

Caring for a person with dementia also requires a great deal of **education.** Caregivers who are educated about the disease know what the disease does to their loved one at each stage of the progression. They know how the disease affects family members. They have a greater awareness of available community resources. And they have a greater repertoire of tools for addressing difficult behaviors and communicating more effectively. This array of knowledge allows the educated caregiver to have realistic, manageable expectations of themselves and their loved one with dementia. The Alzheimer’s Association has a variety of educational resources for family caregivers including reading materials as well as on-line resources available at alz.org. The New Mexico chapter also offers two unique educational programs: **The Savvy Caregiver Program** is a class for family caregivers. Classes meet for two hours, once a week for seven consecutive weeks. The Savvy Caregiver curriculum is an evidence-based training program that covers a variety of topics relevant to the dementia caregiver. **The Veteran’s Project** is an evidence-based educational program for caregivers of veterans, or veterans who are caregivers to others. It is similar to the Savvy Caregiver program, but with an emphasis on issues and resources unique to the veteran community. Veteran’s Project classes typically meet for four hours once a week for three consecutive weeks. Participants of both programs may be eligible for additional respite benefits to make coming to classes less burdensome. Please see our education calendar on pages 10-11 for a schedule of upcoming classes.

The final piece to the “caregiving with patience” puzzle is ensuring adequate support. Dementia caregivers often feel very isolated and alone in their journey, but this doesn’t have to be the case. The Association offers **support groups** throughout the state. Some groups focus on the needs of those in the early stages of Alzheimer’s, but many are specifically designed to provide support to caregivers. These groups offer caregivers the opportunity to network, vent and socialize with other caregivers. The groups also provide a way for people to get practical advice on a variety of topics from more seasoned caregivers. Newly added to the list of support resources offered by the Alzheimer’s Association, is alzconnected.org. This is a social media site for those affected by Alzheimer’s disease that has a large variety of support tools for caregivers, including chat rooms and networking opportunities. For those with limited internet access our **24 hour helpline** is always available. There are care consultants available 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling (800) 272-3900. Help and support are available in over 120 different languages any time, day or night.

One great opportunity for caregivers to access all three anchors of patience-respite, education and support—is to attend our annual family caregiver conference; **Caregiving: The Heart of the Journey.** This conference will take place on Saturday, November 3rd 2012 at Sandia Resort and Casino. Caregivers will have the chance to see experts in the field present on a variety of topics, as well as the opportunity to socialize with other caregivers in a fun and relaxed setting. You can also take advantage of the pampering room and a free plated lunch. Respite care (either on-site or in-your-home) may be available to qualified participants who register early. Contact the Alzheimer’s Association at (505) 266-4473 for more information.

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**Helpline Q & A information contributed by Chris McCaffrey,**
**Greater Albuquerque Regional Manager**
The dancing was certainly a large part of it. Luminaries from television, radio, print and the eldercare industry wowed the audience with their talent and energy.

For many, their prior dancing resume was limited to weddings and high school proms. This lack of experience only added to the surprised excitement generated by the finished products they unveiled.

“I loved them!” dancer and Albuquerque the Magazine editor Dan Mayfield said of his fellow competitors’ routines. “I was stunned. When you’re there in the studio, you’re working as hard as you can, but you don’t know what anyone else was doing. I think I was as thrilled as the audience was. It was cool to see everybody find their own dance voice.”

The fun factor in the ballroom at Hotel Albuquerque may also have been multiplied because the dancers themselves seemed to be beaming with joy. For the second consecutive year, the dancers were graced by professional help from the talented experts of Enchantment Dancing. Owner Chip Hindi and his crew have a gift for making the Gala dancers’ grueling, two-month, practice regimen a smile-stretching lark that rouses a dancing novice’s appetite for more.

“I really enjoyed my lessons from day one,” said dancer and real estate mogul Jackie Bregman. “(Her instructor) Nick (Hill) is a phenomenal teacher. In fact, I’m still taking lessons!”

Pleasurable as it might have been, the physical demands placed on novice dancers attempting to master routines in a matter of weeks were real. Five days before the Gala, Janet Laswell’s kneecap twisted out of place during practice and she was rushed to the hospital.

“I was almost in tears, because we
had worked so hard,” said Laswell, who owns Spotlight Senior Services Magazine.

Frantic discussions tabbed Enchantment’s Kiersten Taylor, who choreographed Laswell’s routine with partner Arsenio Sanchez, as a possible replacement. On event night, however, Laswell struck a pose at the corner of the dance floor, her leg heavily wrapped. When the beat began, Laswell and partner Arsenio Sanchez flew into a hip-shaking routine that drew lustrous whoops and loud applause.

Even the attire seemed to set a good-time tone, from the black and white elegance and stunning beauty of the crowd, to the barely-there frivolity showcased by the dancers.

“That was such a fun part of it,” Jessica Garate, who anchors the evening news on KRQE News 13 and 2 KASA Fox, said of the dancers’ out-loud outfits. “None of it was something any of us would have picked out.”

Sanchez sported a netted shirt, which his life partner, Chris Anaya, claimed had been a member of Sanchez’s wardrobe long before the Gala. It was among the event’s most-talked-about fashions. Garate gave the item a heartily-approving, “I loved it!”

Characteristic of the event was also the generous spirit of its patrons. Enchantment Dancing was a standard bearer, as Hindi and his staff enthusiastically donated more than $30,000 worth of instructional time to make the Gala come alive. Services similarly provided gratis by Posh On Location Beauty & Glamour, Toni & Guy and Disco Mobil Escape added sparkle, poof, and rhythm, respectively. Video packages introducing each of the eight dance teams were created by Jason Baca, and the event was chronicled by Enrique C. Knell Photography, all in hard-working support of the Alzheimer’s Association.

In a furious finish, Bregman narrowly edged Luis Alvidrez and Nancy Oriola to claim the “You’re Our Star” award, as the top dancing fundraiser. With a routine which kept the legion of tassels on her skirt in perpetual flutter, Bregman claimed both the People’s and Judges’ Choice awards, garnering a perfect score from the impaneled judges.

The event melded charity and high times for Mayfield. Concurrent with his Gala practice, he was writing an Albuquerque the Magazine article which profiled a man with Alzheimer’s.

“When you do an interview, in my business, you really get to know somebody,” said Mayfield. “You spend some serious time with him. To get to know his caregivers — and they lean on the Association — it all came together and made (the Gala experience) that much more personal for me.”

While Mayfield dedicated his effort to the article’s subject, Gala night itself was hardly an obligation.

“I just had a blast,” he admitted. “It was one of those times when everyone gets together and is there for a celebration. You can’t beat it. It was just fun.”
**ALZHEIMER’S ASSOCIATION, NEW MEXICO CHAPTER**

**July - December 2012**

### Calendar Key:
- **Savvy Caregiver**: Seven-week course which helps caregivers develop practical skills in caring for their loved one and themselves.
- **Veterans Savvy Caregiver Program**: Three-week Savvy Caregiver course specifically for veterans and their families.
- **Cuidando Con Respeto**: Two-day linguistic and cultural translation of Savvy Caregiver.
- **Basics of Alzheimer’s Disease**: Pathology, warning signs, risk factors, and scope of the disease.
- **Know the 10 Warning Signs**: Warning signs and prevention of Alzheimer’s.
- **Living with Alzheimer’s**: Describes different stages of Alzheimer’s, and assists in preparedness.

### NORTHWEST REGION
Regional Manager-Katie Roper
3300 N. Butler, Suite 221
Farmington, NM 87401
(505) 326-3680
katie.roper@alz.org

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<td>Sept. 4</td>
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<td>Legal and Financial Issues</td>
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### NORTHEAST REGION
Regional Manager-Annabelle Montoya
811 St. Michael’s Dr., Suite 106
Santa Fe, NM 87505
(505) 473-1297
annabelle.montoya@alz.org

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<td>St. Bede’s Episcopal Church, 1601 South Saint Francis Drive, Santa Fe, NM 87505</td>
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<td>Aug. 1</td>
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<td>Volunteer Training</td>
<td>Los Alamos National Bank, 2009 Galisteo Street, Santa Fe, NM 87505</td>
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<td>Aug. 7-21</td>
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<td>Aug. 31</td>
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<td>Breakfast &amp; Learn/ Know the 10 Warning Signs</td>
<td>Pueblo of Santo Domingo Senior Center, Tesuque Street, Santo Domingo Pueblo, NM 87502</td>
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<td>Living with Alzheimer’s: For Caregivers — Early-Stage</td>
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<td>Living with Alzheimer’s: For Caregivers — Middle-Stage</td>
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<td>Coffee Talk/The Basics of Dementia</td>
<td>6600 College Boulevard, Farmington, NM 87402</td>
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### GREATER ALBUQUERQUE REGION
Regional Manager-Chris McCaffrey
9500 Montgomery Blvd. NE, Suite 121
Albuquerque, NM 87111
(505) 268-4473
chris.mccaffrey@alz.org

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<td>Basics of Alzheimer’s Disease for Caregivers</td>
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Attendees Fine Tune their Skills at our First Professional Conference

The Alzheimer’s mind is like an old-fashioned tape reel. When functioning normally, memories are spooled upon it, rotation by rotation, day after day. The oldest, most ingrained memories are wrapped at its center, and progressively older memories are wound around those.

The reel grows a little fatter each day, as newer memories are layered upon older memories. One day, Alzheimer’s halts this process. No new memories are laid upon the reel. Then, the Alzheimer’s mind begins to unravel. More recent memories are lost first, while older reminiscences remain. In this way, a person with Alzheimer’s cannot recollect what they had for breakfast, but can recall in vivid detail their high school prom date.

This is the metaphor Barbara Michels employs in describing the Alzheimer’s disease process. It was developed honestly and at high price, over five decades spent dealing with Alzheimer’s disease in her family, and as the Alzheimer’s Association’s longest-tenured volunteer.

“That way of describing it makes it very understandable — using the analogy of a film reel,” said Rashaun Merryman, a Licensed Practical Nurse and nurse administrator at The Retreat Alzheimer’s Specialty Care, who found this explanation to be one of many useful lessons she learned while participating in the Alzheimer’s Association, New Mexico Chapter’s First Annual Professional Conference.

“I have used it several times with patient’s families, and they’re like, ‘Hey! That really makes sense.’”

Cosponsored by Christus St. Vincent Regional Medical Center, the conference was held May 3 and 4 amidst the rambling adobe charm of Santa Fe’s La Fonda Hotel. The event delivered education ranging from Michels’ frontline practicality to the Alzheimer’s research frontier.

Dr. Moore Arnold, a Principal Scientist at drug manufacturer Biogen Idec and the conference’s keynote speaker, presented a comprehensive look at current research in the fight against Alzheimer’s.

While researchers are experimenting with a variety of techniques in their work to identify treatments, Arnold expounded on the scientific hope that beta-amyloid antibodies, currently being tested, would prove effective.

In Alzheimer’s disease, beta-amyloid protein is known to build up between neurons. Beta-amyloid antibodies break down this protein. It is hoped that introduction of these antibodies will prove to be an effective Alzheimer’s treatment. Two treatments, Bapineuzumab and Solanezumab, which employ such antibodies, are currently in the final phase of their clinical trials.

Arnold, a New Mexico native whose work with Biogen has taken him to Cambridge, MA, explained this promising therapy to the conference audience, and provided updates on other attempted experimental therapies which and had reached apparent dead ends.

The conference also included addresses on identifying different types of dementia, managing medications, environmental design necessary for dementia care, palliative care, and panel discussions regarding legal and ethical considerations in dementia, and cultural diversity in dementia care. Also highlighted was the ongoing work of the Dementia Care TeleECHO Clinic, a virtual clinic hosted by the University of New Mexico’s School of Medicine, which uses teleconferencing to connect rural healthcare providers with dementia experts to share knowledge and address the complexities common in real-world dementia cases.

“The (conference) achieved such a balance of research, clinical, and daily practical support and information,” said Amy Elmore, president of Haciendas at Grace Village, a dementia care facility set to open in Las Cruces later this year. “I left the conference better informed, motivated, and encouraged by both speakers and by colleagues and peers. I feel better able to assist and care for those affected by Alzheimer’s in a multitude of different situations.”
The Skill of Respite

Learning to make the most of your respite time is just like any other skill you want to improve. You have to practice! Will it be hard at first? Of course, especially if you are not in the habit of taking time for yourself. But just like any other type of exercise, you get better and stronger the more you do it. Like other types of exercise, you are much more likely to follow through if you plan it into your routine. You can’t simply wait for a respite opportunity. That’s like waiting to get skinny while you finish a box of doughnuts! You have to give yourself permission to prioritize respite breaks. If you tell yourself “I’ll take a break for me once I’m all caught up” you might be waiting a long time, because caregivers are rarely “caught up”. There are always dishes to do, laundry to finish, errands to run… The good news is all those things will still be there for you to take care of after you take care of yourself!

Here’re some ideas to get you started:

1. Go see a movie.
2. Have coffee with a friend.
3. Go window shopping.
4. Go to the park and read a book (but not one about caregiving…)
5. Work in the garden.
6. Go to the gym, or just go for a walk.
7. Call a friend on the phone for an uninterrupted chat.
8. Indulge your favorite hobby (especially if you haven’t for a while…)
10. Take a nap.

Some things just have to get done, and we have to make time for them, but don’t confuse those things with respite. RESPITE IS NOT:

1. Picking up prescriptions.
2. Doing laundry.
3. Arguing on the phone with the insurance company.
4. Finishing the dishes in the sink.
5. Paying bills.
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Can Stroke Lead to Alzheimer’s?

by Elizabeth Hanes, RN

As researchers work to untangle the possible causes of Alzheimer’s disease, a new study reports a surprising finding: silent strokes may represent an independent risk factor for developing Alzheimer’s.

“We used to think Alzheimer’s was primarily a gradual loss in memory that impacted people’s ability care for themselves,” said Dr. Adam Brickman, PhD. “Our research finding led us to consider that this disease, Alzheimer’s, may also have a vascular component to it.”

Brickman piloted a study at the Taub Institute for Research on Alzheimer’s Disease and the Aging Brain at Columbia University Medical Center in New York last year. He expected to find that a shrunken hippocampus – an area of the brain responsible for our ability to remember things – contributed to memory loss in older adults. And his study did confirm this hypothesis. The silent stroke finding came as a surprise, however.

The study showed that participants with a normal hippocampus scored poorly on memory tests if they’d had a silent stroke. “In some ways, that would be good news because we know how to treat vascular disease,” Brickman said. “and if we can control all those risk factors, then we think we might be able to reduce the burden of Alzheimer’s or minimize the risk.”

What is Silent Stroke?

A stroke occurs when brain tissue dies due to lack of oxygen. Commonly, a blocked or ruptured artery causes stroke. When brain tissue death occurs without any symptoms, it’s called a “silent” stroke. Usually silent strokes affect smaller, localized areas of brain tissue. Most people who’ve had a silent stroke don’t know it, and up to 13% of people under age 40 have suffered one.

What You Can Do

Even without the potential Alzheimer’s connection, stroke is a scary health threat. Luckily, you can take many steps to reduce your risk of stroke – and possibly your risk of developing Alzheimer’s.

1. Maintain a healthy weight. This is possibly the single most important thing you can do to reduce your risk of stroke. Obesity increases your likelihood of developing hypertension, high cholesterol, and Type II diabetes – all risk factors for stroke or silent stroke. Look to the internet for reputable free or low-cost resources on how to eat healthy. Try ChooseMyPlate.gov, the DASH diet, or Spark People.

2. Keep your blood pressure under control. High pressure in your blood vessels can cause them to burst in the brain, causing a hemorrhagic stroke. Get your blood pressure checked regularly so you can treat hypertension promptly. And don’t forget to exercise; it keeps your entire cardiovascular system running smoothly.

3. Rein in your cholesterol levels. Because cholesterol can block arteries and prevent them from delivering oxygen to the brain, high cholesterol levels represent a primary risk factor for stroke. Eat more fiber, especially fruits and vegetables, to help scrub cholesterol from your system. Talk to your doctor about cholesterol-lowering medications. And, again: exercise, exercise, exercise.

4. Treat or reverse Type II diabetes. Type II diabetes raises your risk of stroke significantly, but the good news is you can reverse this disease by eating healthy and losing weight. Meanwhile, check with your doctor about prescriptions to help keep your blood sugar levels under control.

5. Quit smoking. Smoking has been linked to atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries, so quitting now reduces your chance of stroke due to the inability of inflexible blood vessels to deliver oxygen to the brain.

The potential stroke/Alzheimer’s connection remains to be proved. In the meantime, you can’t go wrong by eating healthy and exercising to reduce your chance of having a silent stroke.

Elizabeth Hanes is an Albuquerque freelance writer, caregiver and Alzheimer’s advocate.
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