

Living Longer Growing Stronger

from the Alaska Commission on Aging

The mission of the Alaska Commission on Aging is to ensure dignity and independence for Alaska's seniors and to assist them, through programs and services funded by the Commission, to lead useful and meaningful lives.



Alaskan Seniors: Living Longer, Growing Stronger is a monthly publication of the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA)

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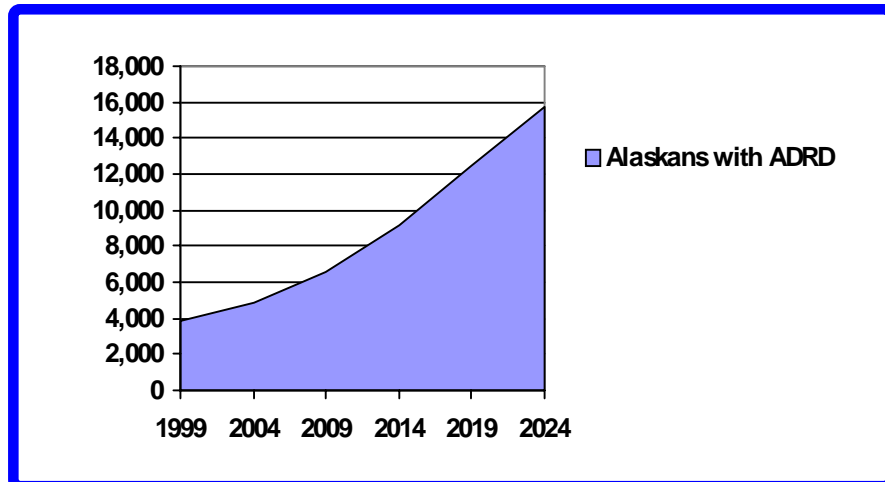
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Estimated Prevalence of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders (ADRD) in Alaska

Alaskans Address Alzheimer's Disease

Approximately 4,000 people in Alaska have Alzheimer's disease. The number of Alaskans suffering from Alzheimer's Disease is expected to rise to over 6,000 by 2015. Nationwide, nearly 50% of those over 85 have Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders (ADRD). As much as 80% of Alaska's Pioneers' Home residents suffer from ADRD. These figures are very tentative, due to the difficulty of diagnosing ADRD, but clearly there is an urgent need for increased effort to understand and treat these disorders.

In previous years, the Alaska Commission on Aging has submitted annual budget

requests to the Trust Mental Health Trust Authority (MHTA). The MHTA is moving toward a two-year budget cycle that will address broad initiatives. During the next two-year budget cycle, the Commission will primarily focus priority on meeting the needs of Alaskans affected by ADRD and their caregivers. These Alaskans are the Commission's core beneficiary group as defined by the MHTA statute. To assist in this focus, the Commission is convening an ADRD Task Force to shape an ADRD Initiative. As the Task Force works, they will periodically consult with the full Commission to assure that their direction is (Continued on page 4)

Statewide Forum Will Hear Alaskans' ADRD Needs

The Alaska Commission on Aging is beginning a process to develop a two-year ADRD (Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders) Initiative. The Commission is preparing this initiative to present to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority this summer, and hopes to begin the initiative with funds from the Trust in July, 2001. An

ADRD Task Force has been convened to shape the initiative.

The first phase of this process is to hold a statewide public forum to solicit input from people affected by ADRD. This listening session will be a time for people to tell the (Continued on page 2)

ADRD Costs Billions Each Year

Currently ADRD is the third most expensive disease in the United States, with an average lifetime cost of \$174,000 per patient. Only treatments for heart disease and cancer are higher. Although it's estimated that Alzheimer's disease costs our society at least \$100 billion a year in medical care and lost productivity, neither Medicare nor private health insurance covers the long-term care needed by most ADRD patients. According to the Alzheimer's Association, American businesses bear more than \$33 billion of that annual burden: \$26 billion in lost productivity of caregivers, and \$7 billion related to health and long-term care costs.

Beyond the monetary cost is the psychological cost to caregivers. According to the Alzheimer's Association, family members or other non-salaried caregivers provide in-home care for 70% of Americans ill with ADRD. A survey conducted by Yankelovich Partners,

Inc. indicates that 80% of responding caregivers feel they are under continuous stress. A similar study reported that caregivers over the age of 66 who experience stress from caring for an ADRD spouse exhibited a 63% higher risk of death from health-related complications than non-caregivers. The ADRD Task Force's goal is to support caregivers through programs including respite, support groups, and adult daycare.

Support and Information for ADRD Sufferers and their Caregivers in Alaska is available from the Alzheimer's Association Alaska Chapter

www.alz.org/chapters/template/alaska/svcar.htm

1-800-478-1080

Anchorage: (907) 561-3313

Fairbanks: (907) 452-2277

Juneau: (907) 586-6044

Palmer: (907) 746-3413

ADRD Teleconferenced Forum (continued from page 1)

Commission what is needed throughout the state in order to better serve people affected by ADRD and their caregivers. This is intended to provide a fresh perspective on the issue to add to the body of knowledge the Task Force brings to the process.

Fourteen sites around the state will host teleconference groups. Two forums will be held on Monday April 10th, the first from 1:30 to 3:00 PM and the second from 7:00 to 8:30 PM. Those interested in participating are invited to attend the forum at the nearest hosting organization listed below. Those who cannot attend a forum at the sites listed above are encouraged to fax their comments and questions to the Alaska Commission on Aging. Forms for this purpose will be available at the sites listed below.

When the plan is drafted, a follow-up public comment opportunity will be scheduled.

Host Sites for April 10 ADRD Teleconference Forum

Anchorage: Alzheimer's Association Alaska Chapter, 240 East Tudor Road Suite 110 (907) 561-3313

Barrow: North Slope Borough Senior Center, on Northstar (907) 852-0372

Fairbanks: Northstar Council on Aging Senior Center, 1424 Moore Street (907) 452-1735

Juneau: Juneau Pioneers' Home, 4675 Glacier Highway (907) 780-6422

Ketchikan: Ketchikan Pioneers' Home, 141 Bryant Street (907) 225-4111

Kodiak: Kodiak Senior Center, 302 Erskine Avenue (907) 486-6181

Nenana: Nenana Senior Center, Market and B Street (907) 832-5818

Nome: Nome Legislative Information Office, 320 E Front Street, State Office Building (907) 443-5555

Seldovia: Lakeside Terrace, Cook Inlet Housing Authority, 350 Alder Street (907) 234-7864

Sitka: Center for Community, 710 Katlian (907) 747-6960

Soldotna: Soldotna Senior Center, 197 West Park Avenue (907) 262-2322

Sterling: Sterling Senior Center, 34453 Sterling Highway (Mile 82.5) (907) 262-6808

Valdez: Valdez Senior Citizens Center, 1300 East Hanagita (907) 835-5032

Wasilla: Wasilla Senior Center, 1301 Century Circle (907) 376-3104

The poem to the left comes from and gives its title to Frances Vadla's *Cloth of Life*, her self-published book of original poems. The poems draw their inspiration from Ms Vadla's years as caregiver to her husband, Lars, who passed away with Alzheimer's Disease in 1996.

Ms. Vadla is a member of the Alzheimer's Association Alaska Chapter Board of Directors. She has generously donated the profits from the sale of *Cloth of Life* to the Chapter. Copies of *Cloth of Life* may be purchased from the Alzheimer's Association Alaska Chapter by calling 1-800-478-1080.

Ms. Vadla lives in Big Lake.

The Cloth of Life is reprinted in *Alaskan Seniors: Living Longer, Growing Stronger* with the gracious permission of Frances Vadla.



The Cloth of Life

My loom sits idle
 I had trouble with this warp
 The tension was uneven, the selvedge too loose
 As I wound it onto the back beam
 one of the threads snapped
 wrapping around its neighbors
 It pulled from the heddle and through the reed
 destroying the orderly overshot pattern—
 knotted, twisted, snarled, tangled

Lars sits idle
 the orderly pattern of his brain destroyed
 by the plaques and tangles of Alzheimer's

Knotted
 Twisted
 Snarled
 Tangled

tension uneven, selvedge raveled—
 the cloth of life destroyed
 —Frances Vadla

What Does “Related Disorders” Mean?

Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders (ADRD) is difficult to diagnose. In fact, there is no definitive diagnostic test for the condition, so the diagnosis is based on exclusion of other conditions. The symptoms of Alzheimer's disease are shared by a number of related disorders, which have come to be grouped as ADRD. Related disorders include Pick's Disease, Parkinson's dementia, multi-infarct dementia (caused by a number of strokes in the brain) and other progressive cognitive impairments.

Because ADRD is so difficult to diagnose, the U.S. Department of Health and Social Services Advisory Panel on Alzheimer's Disease recommends that ADRD be defined by functional impairment and dependency rather than diagnosis or the causes of the disease. The current working definition of ADRD used by Alaska Commission on Aging grantees, reviewed and refined at a grantee meeting in October 1996, reflects this recommendation.

Is it Alzheimer's Disease, or age-related memory problems?

Person with Age-Related Memory Problems

- Forgets some parts of an experience
- Often remembers events later
- Usually able to follow written or spoken directions
- Can use notes as effective reminders
- Knows how to care for self
- Occasionally forgets a name

Person with Alzheimer's Disease

- Forgets whole experiences
- Rarely will remember later
- Increasingly unable to follow written or spoken directions
- Ability to use notes as reminders diminishes
- Gradually forgets how to care for self
- Erosion of vocabulary and language skills

