



**ISSUED BY : DEMENTIA SA  
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## **DEMENTIA NEEDS ACTION NOW!**

### **MEDIA QUICK FACTS ABOUT DEMENTIA**

#### **What is dementia?**

Dementia is a term used to describe various different brain disorders that have in common a loss of thinking function. Dementia is a progressive, degenerative brain syndrome that affects memory, thinking, behaviour and emotion. Dementia knows no social, economic, ethnic or geographical boundaries and affects people throughout the world. As dementia progresses individuals affected need care with all aspects of daily life, worldwide families mostly provide this care.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia and accounts for 50-60% of all cases and is caused by abnormal brain tissue changes.

How fast dementia progresses depends on the individual.

#### **How many people in the world have dementia?**

Dementia is **not** a normal part of ageing. Age is an important risk factor but not the only one

International studies make it clear that dementia occurs in every country of the world. Dementia affects 1 in 20 people over the age of 65 and 1 in 5 over the

age of 80. Worldwide there are an estimated 30 million people with dementia. By 2050 the number will rise to over 100 million.

Populations are ageing fastest in poorer, developing regions. By 2050, nearly 80 percent of older people will live in developing countries. The number of older people in developing countries will triple between 2007 and 2050, from 453 million to 1,6 billion.

Population ageing is turning age profiles on their head. By 2050, there will be more adults over 60 worldwide than children under 14. This demographic shift is unprecedented and will have profound implications for society.

In the developed world - 4,6 million new cases are diagnosed each year – that means that every 70 seconds in the developed world a new case is diagnosed. *(The Lancet)*

### **Will the number of people with dementia increase in the future?**

Research indicates that by 2040, the number of people with dementia will increase dramatically to 81,1million. Caregivers have to cut back on paid work or stop work altogether, informal care is often supplemented by formal paid care and people with dementia are relatively heavy consumers of health services. It is estimated in the United States that direct and indirect annual costs of caring for people with dementia is at least \$100 billion. \*

### **What are the care arrangements for people with dementia?**

Research has shown that most people with dementia live in their own homes and are cared for by a female caregiver usually a spouse or daughter and that caring is associated with substantial psychological and financial strain. (Int J Geriatric Psychiatry 2004 19 170-177). In contrast to developed countries, more than a quarter of people with dementia in developing countries live in a multigenerational household with their children and grandchildren.

## **DEMENTIA NEEDS ACTION NOW!**

### **WHY ?**

**It is essential that in South Africa we start planning and developing policies which will support people diagnosed with dementia and establish services which will ensure that families and carers are equipped to cope with the challenges that go with this insidious disease.**

**Educating communities starts with -**

#### **1. Recognition of the early symptoms of dementia**

Dementia is surrounded by stigma and myth. Many people associate the early symptoms of dementia as a normal consequence of ageing and therefore do not come forward for the help and support that is available. Recognising the symptoms of dementia is the first step towards receiving a diagnosis. A

diagnosis can help to reduce the anxiety of people with dementia and their family, allow a greater chance to benefit from existing treatments, access resources and information and provide more time to plan for the future.

### **Ten early symptoms of dementia:**

1. Memory loss
2. Difficulty in performing everyday tasks
3. Problems with language
4. Disorientation to time and place
5. Poor or decreased judgment
6. Problems with keeping track of things
7. Misplacing things
8. Changes in mood or behaviour
9. Changes in personality
10. Loss of initiative

### **Ensure that services and policies are designed to allow ....**

#### **2. Cost effective interventions**

These are needed worldwide to provide support for people with dementia and their families to maintain and improve quality of life. Research has shown that there are ways to reduce the stresses of caring:

- Information and education empowers people to understand what is happening to them and their loved one and how to cope better.
- Support groups provide an opportunity to share experiences and feelings.
- Professional counseling has been shown to be effective in improving morale and decreasing feelings of stress.
- A break from caring is essential, respite can be achieved informally by arranging for the person with dementia to stay with relatives or friends or formally through services such as day care and short stays in residential units.
- Practical help in the home, financial support and a key person to turn to are also useful.

#### **3. Policy provision**

Integrated policy and services across health and social sectors are essential. Reliable and accurate data about the prevalence and impact of dementia in communities is required to inform better decision-making and policy formation to enable appropriate and accessible service development.

**In South Africa we need to put pressure on medical aids to include dementia as a disease that needs to be included on the prescribed minimum benefits (PMB) list, basic items must be covered included adult incontinence products, Government and State departments must understand the implications of the newly legislated Older Persons Act 13 (2006) to persons with Alzheimer's disease and dementia as well as encourage the study of geriatrics amongst social workers and other**

medical and nursing professionals, provide training to more mental health care facilities where dementia is an understood and recognised disease.

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**COUNSELLING VIA SKYPE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST**

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*Parts of this article have been re-printed with permission from material supplied by Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI)*

## **World Alzheimer's Day (WAD) – 21 September**

\* Ernst, RL; Hay, JW. "The U.S. Economic and Social Costs of Alzheimer's Disease Revisited." American Journal of Public Health 1994; 84(8): 1261 - 1264. This study cites figures based on 1991 data, which were updated in the journal's press release to 1994 figures. Cited in 2001 - 2002 Alzheimer's Disease Progress Report. National Institutes of Health publication number 03-5333, July 2003; p. 2.

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