

SmartFuture Long-Term Care Newsletter July -August 2008



Nancy Curtin, CLTC

"Alzheimer caregivers frequently experience high levels of stress... this stress can be damaging to both a caregiver and the patient with Alzheimer's".

-Alzheimer's Association
<http://alz.org>

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This Month's LTC Update – From Nancy Curtin, CLTC

As a baby boomer, I'm finding that more and more I encounter the reality of Alzheimer's disease. Just recently, two friends told me that a beloved parent had just been diagnosed with it. Alzheimer's is a subject that most people do not like to think about, but it is a reality as we age. According to the Alzheimer's Association, one in eight, or 10 million Americans, will be stricken with this ailment.

As a long-term care planning specialist, this topic is of great concern to me, and I clearly see how it affects my clients. The direct and indirect costs of Alzheimer's and other dementias to Medicare, Medicaid and businesses amount to more than \$148 billion annually.

The financial impact of caring for an Alzheimer's patient can be devastating – but few people are fully aware of the emotional and physical toll of caring for a mentally-impaired loved one. People often start out cheerfully caring for the Alzheimer's patient, as the disease may not seem onerous in its early stages. The reality becomes apparent though when the loved one begins to lose functionality, especially in the activities of daily living, such as bathing (usually first to go), continence, and dressing.

Money runs tight, and the time and energy constraints of managing our own lives while caring full time for someone we love takes its toll on us and affects every area of our lives. Caring for someone who is slipping away mentally while often remaining mobile and physically capable is more overwhelming than most people realize.

It is shocking to realize that approximately 5.2 million people in the United States are living with Alzheimer's. Unfortunately, many who are caring for these individuals have no outside financial or emotional support.

So, what can we all do today? For starters, advance planning while healthy is a must-do for all of us. If there is Alzheimer's in your family history it should be addressed early on, and provisions for possible future care should be made. Even if you have a care partner or children to care for you, you will still need additional help. Financial relief provided by a long-term care insurance policy will help alleviate some of the strain so that you can continue to manage and enjoy your own life.

A comprehensive long-term care insurance policy should provide for at-home care as well as institutional care, covering for when you can no longer keep your loved one at home. The home care element should be structured to provide adequate coverage, since many Alzheimer's sufferers require full-time care.

Always work with a qualified long-term care specialist who will help you put together a plan that fits your lifestyle, finances, and future plans. It is well worth the premiums to have the peace of mind that good long-term care coverage brings.

"As a 59 year old man who has not married yet, I can't be sure I'll have a care partner. Having a long-term care policy gives me peace of mind that I will be cared for as I grow older"

-- Don S..