

Alzheimer's cost triple that of other elderly

March 24 2009, By LINDSEY TANNER , AP Medical Writer

(AP) -- The health care costs of Alzheimer's disease patients are more than triple those of other older people, and that doesn't even include the billions of hours of unpaid care from family members, a new report suggests.

Compared with people aged 65 and older without Alzheimer's, those with the mind-destroying disease are much more often hospitalized and treated in skilled-nursing centers. Their medical costs also often include nursing home care and Medicare-covered home health visits.

That all adds up to at least \$33,007 in annual costs per patient, compared with \$10,603 for an older person without Alzheimer's, according to a report issued Tuesday by the Alzheimer's Association.

The numbers are based on 2004 data and include average per-person [Medicare](#), Medicaid and private insurance costs.

Costs likely have grown since then as the U.S population has aged and the number of Alzheimer's diagnoses has risen, said Angela Geiger, the Alzheimer's Association chief strategy officer.

According to the group's report, nearly 10 million caregivers - mostly family members - provided 8.5 billion hours of unpaid care for Alzheimer's patients last year.

"All of these statistics paint a really grim picture of what's going to happen ... unless we invest in solutions" to delay or prevent the disease,

Geiger said.

This week a Senate committee will hear from an independent coalition of experts that has been working on a strategy for dealing with the growing Alzheimer's population.

An estimated 5.3 million Americans have the disease; by next year nearly half a million new cases will be diagnosed, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

As the disease progresses, people lose the ability to care for themselves and need help with eating, bathing, dressing and other daily activities. Eventually, they may need help with breathing and swallowing.

From 2000 to 2006, while deaths from [heart disease](#), stroke, breast and prostate cancer declined, Alzheimer's deaths rose 47 percent.

Geiger said those trends reflect improved treatments for other diseases, while there are no treatments that can slow or prevent Alzheimer's.

On the Net:

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

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Citation: Alzheimer's cost triple that of other elderly (2009, March 24) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-03-alzheimer-triple-elderly.html>

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