

Landmark report reveals massive global cost of Alzheimer's: 1 percent of global GDP -- and growing

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A landmark report on the Global Economic Impact of Dementia finds that Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are exacting a massive toll on the global economy, with the problem set to accelerate in coming years. The World Alzheimer Report 2010 - issued on World Alzheimer's Day by Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) - provides the most current and comprehensive global picture of the economic and social costs of the illness. The Report was jointly authored by Professor Anders Wimo of the Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden; and Professor Martin Prince, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London, UK.

'This is a wake-up call that Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are the single most significant health and social crisis of the 21st century,' said Dr Daisy Acosta, Chairman of ADI. 'World governments are woefully unprepared for the social and economic disruptions this disease will cause.'

The Report reveals:

The worldwide costs of [dementia](#) will exceed 1% of global GDP in 2010, at US\$604 billion.

- If dementia care were a country, it would be the world's 18th largest economy. If it were a company, it would be the world's

largest by annual revenue exceeding Wal-Mart (US\$414 billion) and Exxon Mobil (US\$311 billion).

- The number of people with dementia will double by 2030, and more than triple by 2050.
- The costs of caring for people with dementia are likely to rise even faster than the prevalence - especially in the developing world, as more formal social care systems emerge, and rising incomes lead to higher opportunity costs.
- Reports from individual countries such as the UK suggest that dementia is one of the costliest illnesses - and yet research and investment is at a far lower level than for other major illnesses.

'The scale of this crisis cries out for global action,' said Marc Wortmann, Executive director of ADI. 'History shows that major diseases can be made manageable - and even preventable - with sufficient global awareness and the political will to make substantial investments in research and care options.'

'This new Report gives us the clearest, most comprehensive picture yet of the global economic and social costs of dementia,' said Prof Anders Wimo. 'In this World Alzheimer Report 2010, we merged the best available data and the most recent insights regarding the worldwide economic cost of dementia. This enabled us to provide more detailed estimates than before, by making use of recently available data that considerably strengthens the evidence base.'

The Report combines the most current prevalence data from the World Alzheimer Report 2009 with improved data on low and middle-income countries from the 10/66 Dementia Research Group studies in Latin America, India and China. The Report uses representative population-based samples from developing countries to better quantify the cost of

informal care systems that have previously been excluded from impact estimates.

Co-author Professor Martin Prince urged nations to develop better plans for caring for the millions who have the disease. 'The care of people with dementia is not just a health issue - it is a massive social issue,' said Prof Prince. 'This is particularly true in low and middle income countries which lack adequate systems of formal care. Governments must show greater leadership, working with all stakeholders, to drive solutions to the long term care issue.'

Recommended Actions

The Report urges the global community to take the following immediate actions:

- Governments worldwide should act urgently to make Alzheimer's disease a top priority and develop national plans to deal with the social and health consequences of dementia. Several countries have moved forward to develop national plans, including France, Australia and England. It is critical for other governments to follow suit.
- Governments and other major research funders must increase research funding to a level more proportionate to the economic burden of the condition. Recently published data from the UK suggests that a 15-fold increase is required to reach parity with research into heart disease, and a 30-fold increase to achieve parity with cancer research.
- Governments worldwide must develop policies and plans for long-term care that anticipate and address social and demographic

trends and have an explicit focus on supporting family caregivers and ensuring social protection of vulnerable people with [Alzheimer's disease](#) and other dementias.

- The scale of what is facing us elevates this to a global challenge, which must be addressed as a top WHO priority and on the G-20/G-8 agenda.

Ruth Sutherland, Interim Chief Executive of Alzheimer's Society, said: 'These shocking statistics provide yet more proof that we cannot afford to ignore the growing global dementia crisis. These sky high figures represent not only a huge economic burden but also reflect the immeasurable impact dementia has on the lives of millions of people across the world. There are 750,000 people living with dementia in the UK and this number is set to reach a million within a generation. If we are to transform lives and reduce costs we need to act now. The government must lead the way in ensuring national dementia strategies are fully implemented and dementia research is given the funding it so desperately needs.'

Dementia is a syndrome that can be caused by a number of progressive disorders that affect memory, thinking, behavior and the ability to perform everyday activities. Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia. Approximately 0.5% of the world's total population live with dementia and this will grow exponentially. After age 65, the likelihood of developing Alzheimer's roughly doubles every five years. At the age of 85, the odds of a person developing it are close to 50 percent. In the World Alzheimer Report 2009, ADI estimated that there are 35.6 million people living with dementia worldwide, increasing to 65.7 million by 2030 and 115.4 million by 2050.

More information: The Report may be found at www.alz.co.uk/worldreport

Provided by King's College London

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