

US deaths from Alzheimer's disease rise significantly

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Nearly 10,000 more people died of Alzheimer's disease in the United States last year than in 2013, a significant rise of 8.1 percent, according to US health data released Wednesday.

Global health authorities have warned that cases of Alzheimer's—the most common form of dementia—would soar along with the aging population in the coming years.

But whether the latest data shows a true rise in Alzheimers [death](#), or just a more frequent accounting of Alzheimer's as a cause of death, remains a matter of debate.

The 8.1 percent rise was the highest seen among the top 10 causes of death in the United States, the report by the National Center for Health Statistics found.

Alzheimer's deaths rose from 84,767 in 2013 to 93,541 in 2014, a NCHS spokesman told AFP.

According to Marc Gordon, an Alzheimer's researcher and chief of Neurology at Zucker Hillside Hospital in New York, the data comes from information recorded on death certificates.

"It is unclear to what extent more people are dying from Alzheimer's [disease](#), or whether Alzheimer's disease is increasingly recognized by clinicians as a cause of death," said Gordon, who was not involved in the

NCHS study.

An uptick in [death rates](#) were also seen for unintentional injuries (up 2.8 percent), suicide (up 3.2 percent) and stroke (0.8 percent).

The leading cause of death—heart disease—fell 1.6 percent, while cancer deaths dropped 1.2 percent and deaths from influenza and pneumonia fell five percent.

No cure

According to the Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's is the only one of the 10 leading causes of death that cannot be prevented, cured, or slowed.

One in three seniors will die of Alzheimer's or another form of dementia, experts say.

"Alzheimer's is having a rapidly growing impact on American society," said Matthew Baumgart, senior director of public policy at the Alzheimer's Association.

"Alzheimer's death rates have been rising steadily over the past 15 years—increasing 40 percent since 2000, when the new data are included," he added.

Baumgart said increasing awareness of Alzheimer's disease has meant more people report it as a cause of death.

Another factor in the increase is "large investments by the federal government in research for other diseases have led to decreases in deaths from other causes," he told AFP.

"This means more people are living longer and to an age where they are at greater risk of developing Alzheimer's—and dying from it."

About 5.3 million Americans are currently living with Alzheimer's disease.

Worldwide, some 46.8 million people currently have dementia, and that number is expected to triple by the year 2050, reaching some 131.5 million, according to Alzheimer's Disease International.

The disease carries a heavy cost burden, costing the world \$818 billion in 2015.

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