

Research suggests symptomatic Alzheimer's treatments may reduce care costs

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New research has linked the use of existing treatments for Alzheimer's to lower healthcare costs and increased survival for people with the disease. The study, which examined the impact of medications used to treat the symptoms of Alzheimer's, is presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference 2016 today (Monday 25 July).

The US study, from pharmaceutical company Merck, looked at the records of 1,338 people with Alzheimer's, half of whom had been prescribed treatments for the disease, and half of whom had not. Existing treatments do not stop or slow the course of the disease, but are used to help people cope with some of the symptoms.

The results showed that people who had never been prescribed an Alzheimer's treatment tended to be older, with more severe health conditions in addition to Alzheimer's. The death rate among this group was almost twice as high as those who received a treatment, and those not on these medications had higher monthly healthcare costs overall, averaging \$2,349 per month compared to \$2,207.

Dr Matthew Norton, Head of Policy at Alzheimer's Research UK, the UK's leading dementia research charity, said:

"Existing treatments for Alzheimer's are more effective for some people than for others, and while it's unclear whether the people in this study who were not prescribed these drugs could have benefited, many people with the disease find that symptomatic treatments can boost their quality

of life. This research suggests that these treatments may also be associated with lower healthcare costs in the US, and while the healthcare system in this study is different to the UK's, the results further underline the importance of these medications.

"Recent evidence has highlighted differences in prescribing rates for Alzheimer's drugs across the UK, and it is crucial for this disparity to be addressed to ensure that everyone has the same access to treatments that may help them. In the meantime, we still need better treatments to tackle this devastating disease, and we must continue to invest in research to achieve this goal."

Provided by Alzheimer's Research UK

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