

Alzheimer's patients' health care costs higher already before diagnosis

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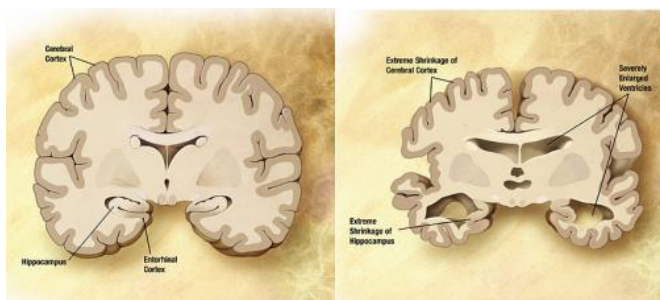


Diagram of the brain of a person with Alzheimer's Disease. Credit: Wikipedia/public domain.

The health care costs of patients diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease (AD) start to increase already one year before the diagnosis, shows a new study from the University of Eastern Finland. The differences in the health care costs between AD patients and non-AD patients were the greatest during six months following the diagnosis, with AD patients having 5,088 euros higher health care costs per person-year. After the first six months, the differences evened out. Two years after the diagnosis, the health care costs of AD patients stabilised at a level two times higher than that of non-AD patients.

The majority of the [health care costs](#) of AD patients, i.e. 78-84 per cent, were caused by hospital care and only a fraction by [drug therapy](#). Anti-dementia drugs initiated after the diagnosis explained the majority of the drug costs. Five years prior to the diagnosis, Alzheimer's patients had on average 1.4 hospital days more per person-year than non-AD patients, whereas two years after the diagnosis they had as many as 14.2 hospital days more.

The study used data from the Finnish Medication Use and Alzheimer's Disease Study, Medalz, and analysed the hospital care and drugs costs of

70,718 Finnish AD patients living in their own home and the [hospital care](#) and [drug costs](#) of as many non-AD patients from five years before until two years after the diagnosis.

Data of AD diagnoses was obtained from the Finnish Social Insurance Institution's Reimbursement Register, data on hospital days from the Finnish Hospital Discharge Register, and data on medication from the Finnish Social Insurance Institution's Prescription Register. The costs of drug therapy were analysed as overall costs, and the costs of hospital days were calculated according to the Finnish health care system's unit costs, which also include the patient's payment contribution.

More information: Hospital care and drug costs from 5 years before until 2 years after the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease in a Finnish nationwide cohort. Heidi Taipale, Maija Purhonen, Anna-Maija Tolppanen, Antti Tanskanen, Jari Tiihonen, Sirpa Hartikainen. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, published online 9.11.2015.

sjp.sagepub.com/content/early/.../94815614705.abstract

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