



The Maryland State Medical Society

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NOVEMBER SPOTLIGHTS ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND FAMILY CAREGIVING

BALTIMORE, November 9, 2022 – Alzheimer's takes a devastating toll on caregivers. Compared with caregivers of people without dementia, twice as many caregivers of those with dementia indicate substantial emotional, financial, and physical difficulties. Nearly 60 percent of those caregivers rate the emotional stress of caregiving as high or very high.

In Maryland, close to 28% of caregivers struggle with depression. Many are in poor physical health, and more than two-thirds are living with chronic health problems. “In 2021, Maryland caregivers provided an estimated 371 billion hours of unpaid care, valued at more than \$6.8 billion,” said David McShea, executive director of the Alzheimer’s Association Greater Maryland Chapter. “The best argument for providing support services for affected families is that if Medicare assumed their cost of care – which currently pays an annual per capita of \$32,017 for people with dementia – it would bankrupt the system.”

Given the current trajectory of the disease, the number of Americans living with Alzheimer’s is expected to double by 2050. The current number of Marylanders living with Alzheimer’s disease is projected to increase 18% in just three years to 130,000.

Primary care physicians (PCPs) are increasingly on the front lines, answering questions related to Alzheimer’s or other dementias every few days or more. A survey released in the Alzheimer’s Association 2020 Alzheimer’s Disease Facts and Figures report found that half of PCPs say the medical profession is not prepared to meet this demand. Among those surveyed:

- 92% believe patients and caregivers expect them to know the latest thinking and best practices around dementia care.
- One-third say they refer dementia patients to specialists at least once a month
- More than half say there are not enough dementia care specialists in their area to meet patient demand, a problem more common in rural areas.

“We could not be more pleased to work in partnership with the Alzheimer’s Association to help alleviate the demand on primary Care physicians and chart a responsible path forward for providing resources and support,” noted MedChi CEO Gene Ransom.

The Alzheimer’s Association has worked with key stakeholders to contribute to the recently released Maryland State Plan. Overseen by the Virginia I. Jones Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias Council, the plan will address challenges faced by Alzheimer’s and dementia caregivers and identify opportunities to develop and

infrastructure that provides the critical resources and support they need. Among the Plan's goals is the creation of a dedicated team led by a Director of Dementia Services and Brain Health to coordinate services to support Maryland caregivers. In May, Governor Larry Hogan allocated \$3.5 million to fund this endeavor.

This success would not have been possible without the leadership of several members of the General Assembly, including Speaker Pro Tem Sheree Sample-Hughes (D-Salisbury) and Senator Malcolm Augustine (D-Prince George's County), who serve on the State Alzheimer's Council. Retiring Senator Ron Young (D-Frederick) was instrumental in securing added funding.

"Caregivers are essential and they are exhausted," said Joseline Pena-Melnyk (D-Prince George's County), chair of the Maryland House Health and Government Operations Committee. "In November, and as we think about National Family Caregivers Month and dementia--a disease that disproportionately impacts our Black and Latino communities--we must recognize the need to educate, support, and facilitate collaboration with these caregivers and our essential network of primary care providers statewide."

To learn more about Alzheimer's disease and ways to support families and people living with the disease, visit alz.org or call the Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline at 800.272.3900.

About The Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association leads the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia – by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementia®. Visit alz.org or call 800.272.3900.

About MedChi

MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society is a non-profit membership association of Maryland physicians. It is the largest physician organization in Maryland. The mission of MedChi is to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients and the public health of Maryland. For more information, please visit www.medchi.org.