



AGING TODAY

It takes a Village



By Bob Roth, Managing Partner of Cypress HomeCare Solutions

When I joined my family's business Cypress Home-Care Solutions (Cypress) back in December 2003, I realized very quickly that many of the clients that we were serving had a form of dementia and some had received a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. In now 16 years at the helm I have seen this population base increase to nearly triple our census here at Cypress.

The statistics are overwhelming. The toll of Alzheimer's disease is reaching epidemic proportions. One in ten Americans over age 65 has Alzheimer's disease at a cost of \$290 billion annually. Someone receives a devastating Alzheimer's diagnosis every 65 seconds and over 5.8 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease. Statisticians predict that in the next 30 years, over 14 million people may be living with Alzheimer's disease with the cost of care exceeding \$1.1 trillion a year if researchers aren't able to prevent or find a cure for the disease.

Currently Alzheimer's is the 6th leading cause of death here in the United States, in the United Kingdom dementia and Alzheimer's is the leading cause of death recently pushing heart disease into second place. This finding comes from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency and the Office for National Statistics.

Alzheimer's is often referred to as a "woman's disease." Recent facts show that two-thirds of all Alzheimer's cases are in women. Researchers are still investigating why women are more likely to develop Alzheimer's than men are. The Alzheimer's Association's 2019 report suggests that while scientists previously thought the discrepancy is due to women living longer, some researchers think genetics, hormones or lifestyle could lead to a higher incidence of Alzheimer's among women.

The Alzheimer's Association found that Alzheimer's deaths have increased by 145 percent between 2000 and 2017.

A 2014 study discovered that in 2010, nearly 503,400 people who were over age 75 died from some form of dementia. This estimate was about five times higher than most predictions.

The obvious question is what can we do to prevent dementia and/or Alzheimer's? The World Health Organization recently reported that moderate cardiovascular exercise, diet, quitting smoking, drinking in moderate amounts (or eliminating alcohol altogether) and avoiding social isolation can all cut your dementia risk.

This overload of very discouraging data can be overwhelming and give people the sense that the futures is somewhat bleak. But the question should be, what can I do?

So, here's what I have done.

From the time I started, I knew I wanted to make a difference. In early 2004 I volunteered to serve as the Memory Walk co-chair for the Alzheimer's Association. I proudly served in this capacity for 4 years and met some amazing people and families. Shortly after my 4th tour duty as co-chair for this marquee event (which during this time we increased the attendance 4-fold and donations nearly 10 times what they had raised previously), I discovered the Banner Alzheimer's Institute (BAI). I immediately fell in love with their mission and served on their board of directors for nearly 10 years, stepping off the board in late 2017. The work that they are doing at Banner is nothing short of phenomenal. BAI is helping to lead the fight against Alzheimer's through its cutting-edge studies in detection, treatment and prevention and through a comprehensive model of care that addresses both medical and non-medical needs of patients and their families.

A few years back BAI created the Alzheimer's Prevention Registry (Registry) in collaboration with partnering organizations as part of its mission to end Alzheimer's without losing another generation. The Phoenix-based non-profit organization is part of Banner Health, one of the largest non-profit health care systems in the country.

As an engaged community of individuals and organizations united by this cause, the Registry (www.endALZnow.org) is an online resource for those who want to stay abreast of the latest in Alzheimer's news, scientific advances and overall brain health. In turn, Registry members become informed advocates for Alzheimer's prevention.

The registry to date has enrolled 346,301 people age 18+, with or without a family history of Alzheimer's, the Registry also supports participation in a variety of community-based Alzheimer's prevention studies and gives members the opportunity to have a direct impact on the future of Alzheimer's. "Studies often need to screen 10 to 15 times the number of people needed to enroll because most trials require specific criteria for participation. This Registry allows us to get to the answers faster," said Dr. Jessica Langbaum, principal scientist at BAI and associate director of the Alzheimer's Prevention Initiative.

While participation in research studies is optional, the Registry is the best effort to bring together those who share the belief that now is the time to end Alzheimer's. It leverages the collective strengths of esteemed researchers and organizations and harnesses the power of a public willing to participate in the study process and make a meaningful difference in the fight against Alzheimer's. "Only by working together can we find ways to prevent Alzheimer's before we lose another generation," said Dr. Eric M. Reiman, CEO of Banner Research and executive director of BAI.

Planning for the future is paramount, and as a community we will need to pull together if we are going to ever eradicate our world of this horrible disease. That means in the research community and in all communities across our globe.

Now it is time to act. When you have individuals, who are united by a cause that is for the greater good of mankind great things can happen. Come and join me in this movement to end Alzheimer's. Sign up for the Alzheimer's Prevention Registry at www.endALZnow.org and make the difference in the lives of our future generations. It may take a village to raise a child; but in order for us to find a cure, it will take every bit of our village and many others too.

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