



# Health Awareness

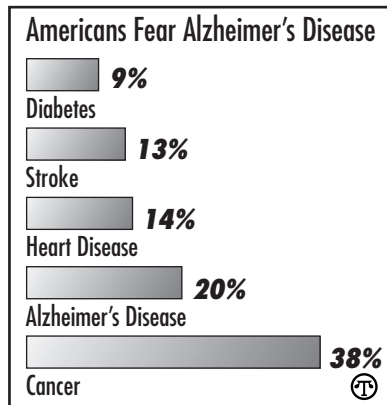
## Americans Fear Alzheimer's More Than Heart Disease, Diabetes or Stroke, But Few Prepare

(NAPSA)—Americans fear Alzheimer's disease more than any illness other than cancer—and for older people, concerns about Alzheimer's outrank even cancer. More than a third of all Americans know a family member or friend who has Alzheimer's, and nearly two-thirds of Americans believe they will have to provide care someday for someone with Alzheimer's.

These are just some of the results from a January 2006 MetLife Foundation/Harris Interactive poll of American adults. The survey, found in "MetLife Foundation Alzheimer's Survey: What America Thinks," included questions about how people view Alzheimer's disease, what they know about it and what they are doing to plan for a future that may include the deadly illness.

A progressive brain disorder that science has yet to defeat, Alzheimer's gradually destroys a person's memory and ability to reason, communicate and function. Currently, 4.5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease, and the Alzheimer's Association estimates that these numbers will grow to as many as 16 million Americans by 2050. Increasing age is the greatest risk factor for Alzheimer's. One in 10 individuals over 65 and nearly half of those over 85 are affected. The Alzheimer's Association and the National Institute on Aging estimate that direct and indirect costs of current care are at least \$100 billion annually.

The survey results underscore not only the fears that people have about this illness, but also



**Currently, 4.5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease—that includes one in 10 people over the age of 65.**

the disturbing fact that few are prepared to face a future that may include Alzheimer's.

Key findings from the poll, which was commissioned by MetLife Foundation, are summarized in a report available at [www.metlife.org](http://www.metlife.org). They include:

- Americans fear Alzheimer's disease. When people are asked to name the disease they are most afraid of getting from a list of illnesses, one out of five picks Alzheimer's, while only 14 percent worry about heart disease and 13 percent are concerned about stroke. Only cancer tops Alzheimer's. In fact, adults aged 55 and older fear getting Alzheimer's even more than cancer.

- Americans know little or nothing about Alzheimer's. While virtually all of those surveyed are aware of the disease (93 percent), almost three-quarters (74 percent) say they know only a little or

nothing at all about Alzheimer's.

- One-third of Americans say they have direct experience with Alzheimer's disease. One in three Americans (35 percent) has a family member and/or friend with Alzheimer's.

- Most Americans are concerned that they will be responsible at some point for caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease. More than three out of five people worry that they will have to eventually provide or care for someone with the disease.

Most Americans recognize the need to create a plan to address the possibility of Alzheimer's disease, but very few have taken steps to do so. More than eight out of 10 Americans think it is important to plan ahead for the possibility of getting Alzheimer's disease. However, despite the overwhelming agreement that planning is important, almost no one has taken action. Nearly nine out of 10 Americans say they have made no comprehensive plans. The survey shows that Americans know enough about Alzheimer's disease to fear its onset, but have not taken any steps to provide for the possibility of developing the disease.

Americans' fears of Alzheimer's are justified, given its increasing presence among a population that will live longer. As the population ages, it is essential to learn as much as possible about the disease and plan for the future.

More information about MetLife Foundation and the Alzheimer's Survey is available at [www.metlife.org](http://www.metlife.org).