



Medical Hope

Leading Scientists Discuss: What Does The Future Hold For Alzheimer's?

(NAPSA)—Presently, 4.5 million people have Alzheimer's. This number is expected to increase as millions in the baby-boom generation approach their senior years. The disease strikes an estimated one in 10 people aged 65 and older, and 50 percent of those 85 or older. It is the eighth leading cause of death in the U.S. Without a cure, the Alzheimer's Association estimates that between 11 million and 16 million Americans will have the disease by 2050.

Despite these staggering numbers, too many Americans are not recognizing Alzheimer's disease as a growing health threat, according to experts who recently gathered at the 20th Anniversary MetLife Foundation Awards for Medical Research in Alzheimer's Disease for a panel discussion on the state of Alzheimer's research. The discussion was moderated by noted gerontologist Dr. Robert Butler, President and CEO, International Longevity Center and founding director of the National Institute on Aging.

"There needs to be greater urgency around getting closer to a significant breakthrough in Alzheimer's research," said C. Robert Henrikson, president and CEO of MetLife, who addressed the Awards luncheon. "Alzheimer's devastates families, emotionally and financially, and we have to do a better job at helping the public understand this impact."

"We need to commit resources,

According to the Alzheimer's Association, here are 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease:

1. Memory loss
2. Difficulty performing familiar tasks
3. Problems with language
4. Disorientation to time and space
5. Poor or decreased judgement
6. Problems with abstract thinking
7. Misplacing things
8. Changes in mood or behavior
9. Changes in personality
10. Loss of initiative



as we did to conquer polio in the fifties," said John Trojanowski, M.D., Ph.D., a past recipient of the MetLife Award from the University of Pennsylvania.

At the discussion, the scientists predicted that early detection and diagnosis may play a role in Alzheimer's treatment. "If we wait for those times when people are clinically symptomatic, it may be too late, even for very effective treatments," said William Klunk, M.D., Ph.D., of the University of Pittsburgh, also a past MetLife Award winner.

There is an increasing sense that lifestyle changes may play a role in brain aging, as well. "Enrichment, exercise and several other things that are independent of drugs may impact the course of brain aging," said Carl Cotman, Ph.D., University of California.

Despite significant advancements in the past two decades, there still remains work to be done before the mystery of Alzheimer's is solved. Recruiting young people into the Alzheimer's field is critically important. In fact, according to the winner of this year's MetLife Award, Karen Hsiao Ashe, M.D., Ph.D., of the University of Minnesota Medical School and Minneapolis VA Center, fewer American high school graduates are entering the biomedical sciences and research fields, a problem that needs to be addressed.

"We all play an important part in making young people aware of the importance of the work being done in this field, and getting them excited about the fact that they can truly make a difference," said Dr. Ashe. "A lifetime dedicated to medical research is a noble pursuit, and more young people need to know this."

Created in 1986, the MetLife Foundation Awards recognize scientists who have made significant contributions to the understanding of Alzheimer's disease. MetLife Foundation also supports a number of other Alzheimer-related initiatives, including numerous programs with the Alzheimer's Association, and sponsorship of the breakthrough PBS documentary "The Forgetting: A Portrait of Alzheimer's." More information about MetLife Foundation is available at www.metlife.org.