

Caring For Someone With Alzheimer's Without Forgetting Your Own Mental & Emotional Health

(NAPSA)—The emotional toll of being a caregiver for someone with Alzheimer's disease can be more significant than any other challenge in facing a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. More than 80 percent of Alzheimer's caregivers report frequent high levels of stress; nearly half suffer from depression and many have difficulty sleeping. Considering that some four million Americans currently have Alzheimer's disease and that the number is expected to increase to 14 million by 2050, caregiver issues are a growing concern.

Completely eliminating stress when caring for a spouse, parent or close relative with Alzheimer's disease is usually not an option, but the following tips can help reduce it:

1. Learn what to expect. Caregivers need to take time to learn how the disease may affect behavior. For example, managing *your* irritation may be easier if you understand your husband can't remember where the soup pot goes or how to unload the dishwasher because of the memory loss associated with his disease—not because he doesn't care or want to bother learning where things belong.

2. Seek help from family and friends. Though it may sound awkward or formal, according to the Alzheimer's Association, many caregivers find that holding a family meeting helps. It's important that family and friends understand what a caregiver is going through daily and chip in to help give the primary caregiver a much-needed break.

3. Consider care outside the home. An occasional free



evening—thanks to another family member filling in—may not be enough. Caregivers *and* the one they care for may benefit from structured activity—such as afternoons spent at a local senior or adult daycare center. Caregivers report feeling tremendously re-energized after having some time to themselves.

4. Learn about treatment options. Caregivers should understand about treatments that may help temporarily alleviate symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. There's currently no cure or medication available that can reverse or stop the disease's progression. However, research has shown that some medicines *can slow* the worsening of symptoms—allowing those with Alzheimer's disease, and their friends and families, to make the most of every day.

In fact, recent study findings indicate long-term treatment with the medication Reminyl® (galantamine) may slow the progression of symptoms in the disease's mild to moderate stages.

"The results of this study—the largest, long-term one of its

kind—shows us that people who took Reminyl faithfully for four years were able to slow down the course of their decline by 50 to 60 percent," explained Dr. Stephen Aronson, geriatric psychiatrist and clinical assistant professor, University of Michigan Medical School. "This suggests benefits from getting on treatment early and staying on it."

Reminyl is used for the treatment of mild to moderate dementia of the Alzheimer's type. The most common side effects reported in patients taking Reminyl included nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, anorexia and weight loss. Most were mild and temporary. For complete product information, visit www.reminyl.com.

5. Don't neglect your physical health. Taking care of yourself physically—by eating well-balanced meals, exercising and getting plenty of rest—will also help alleviate stress.

6. Access resources. To learn more about caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease, visit www.sharingcare.com, an online information and support resource for caregivers, individuals concerned about Alzheimer's disease and health care professionals. The Sharing Care Web site is hosted by the manufacturer of Reminyl, the newest, fastest-growing prescription Alzheimer's treatment. Helpful tips for caregivers are also available on the Alzheimer's Association Web site at www.alz.org.

It's important to know that there is hope and help for people with Alzheimer's disease and their families.