



## spotlight on health care

### Support Groups Can Be Invaluable Resources To Caregivers Of People With Alzheimer's Disease

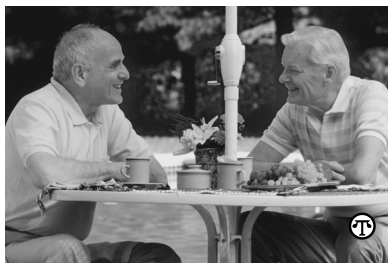
(NAPSA)—Just ask any caregiver of a loved one with Alzheimer's disease and he or she will tell you: Caregiving is rewarding but often a very challenging task. People with the disease rely on caregivers to provide support emotionally, financially and with activities of daily living. But who is caring for the caregivers?

#### Help Is Out There

That's where support groups come in. They play an invaluable role, giving caregivers a venue for sharing experiences, exchanging information and providing encouragement. In fact, a recent survey of caregivers of people with Alzheimer's disease found that the majority of respondents wanted more emotional support from family and friends. Support groups may help fill this void.

"There's no doubt that support groups can be incredibly beneficial to caregivers," said Lesley Blake, M.D., psychiatrist and Alzheimer's disease expert, Eastern State Hospital, Medical Lake, Wash. "They are a good forum for sharing feelings, connecting with a community, and learning facts about the disease and ways to treat it."

In particular, support groups can introduce caregivers to important treatment options that they may have overlooked. For example, the same survey showed that most caregivers were unaware of combination therapy, a treatment option that combines two FDA-approved classes of medications for Alzheimer's disease. Treating



people who are in the moderate to severe stages of the disease with combination therapy has shown to yield activities of daily living benefits, as well as behavioral and cognitive improvements.

#### Finding Support Groups

There are several ways to approach finding support groups in your area. You can ask your physician, hospital or church for referrals; you could search the Internet for online support groups; or you can reach out to national Alzheimer's disease organizations such as the Alzheimer's Association ([www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)) and the Alzheimer's Foundation of America ([www.alzfdn.org](http://www.alzfdn.org)).

#### About Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive, degenerative disorder that attacks the brain's nerve cells, resulting in memory loss, thinking and language skills impairment and behavioral changes. An estimated one in eight persons over age 65 has the condition, often requiring spouses, children and even grandchildren to act as caregivers for their loved ones.

For more information about Alzheimer's disease, please visit [www.alzheimersonline.com](http://www.alzheimersonline.com).