

Study Finds African-American And Hispanic Caregivers Face Gap In Alzheimer's Disease Knowledge

(NAPSA)—A new survey from the Alzheimer's Foundation of America gives important new insight into the attitudes and needs of African-American and Hispanic caregivers of people with Alzheimer's disease.

Perhaps most significantly, these caregivers are much more likely than caregivers of other races to mistakenly consider the disease a normal part of the aging process and dismiss its symptoms as part of getting older. The average delay in diagnosis among all caregivers surveyed, in fact, is more than 2.5 years.

"Facing Alzheimer's disease is never easy, but getting a diagnosis and taking advantage of support services are crucial steps to treating and managing the disease," said Eric J. Hall, Chief Executive Officer, Alzheimer's Foundation of America. "We encourage everyone touched by Alzheimer's disease to reach out for assistance—help is out there."

"Alzheimer's disease is a devastating illness that is by no means a normal part of aging," added Warachal E. Faison, M.D., Medical University of South Carolina. "The fact is, it's crucial for caregivers to be able to identify symptoms and bring their loved one to a doctor without delay for proper diagnosis and treatment."

The survey also shed light on the following:

Support Groups

African-American and Hispanic caregivers rely heavily on support groups, yet only around half of African-American respondents and one-third of Hispanic respondents said they felt the support



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groups they were able to access were appropriate to their specific religious or ethnic background. A majority of caregivers—African Americans in particular—wished they had more emotional support from friends and family as well as knowledge and direction from healthcare professionals.

Religion and Spirituality

In addition to support groups, religion and spirituality play a vital role in the lives of these caregivers. While respondents who are religious are more likely to turn to religious leaders for support, nearly two-thirds of non-religious respondents said that their spiritual beliefs have a significant impact on their healthcare decisions. Interestingly, even survey respondents who declared themselves non-religious, felt more religious along the caregiving journey.

Assisted Living Facilities

Despite the important role assisted living facilities and nurs-

ing homes play in caring for people with Alzheimer's disease, the survey revealed that many African-American and Hispanic caregivers don't consider them an option. Those caregivers who would not place their loved one in a facility felt that it is their responsibility to take care of their loved one or said doing so would make them feel guilty.

Treatment

Medications exist that can treat the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. The survey showed, however, that the majority of caregivers surveyed were unaware of combination therapy, a type of treatment that combines medication from the two classes of Alzheimer's disease drugs currently approved by the FDA.

About Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive brain disorder leading to a loss of memory and ability to learn, reason, make judgments, communicate, and carry out daily activities.

Alzheimer's disease currently strikes approximately 5.1 million Americans, with an estimated one in eight persons over age 65 and nearly half of those 85 or older suffering from the disease. In fact, published reports project that this number could more than triple to over 16 million people in the United States by 2050.

Help Is Out There

For more information, call (toll-free) 866-AFA-8484 or visit www.alzfdn.org. This survey was conducted for the Alzheimer's Foundation of America and sponsored by Forest Pharmaceuticals, Inc.