



## A More Fulfilling Life: Alzheimer's Disease Treatments

(NAPSA)—Alzheimer's Disease—a progressive condition where the main symptoms include loss of memory, lack of social functioning and personality changes—is shockingly common. It affects nearly four million Americans and an estimated 360,000 new cases are diagnosed each year. While there is currently no known cure for Alzheimer's, early diagnosis and treatment may help those afflicted live more normal and fulfilling lives, at least during the earlier stages of the disease.

There are four prescription drugs, known as "cholinesterase inhibitors," approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to treat the symptoms of mild to moderate Alzheimer's Disease. Although none of these medications halts the disease itself, Galantamine hydrobromide (Reminyl®), Rivastigmine tartrate (Exelon®), Donepezil (Aricept®) and Tacrine (Cognex®) can help delay or prevent symptoms from becoming worse for a limited time.

"Benefits for these medications tend to occur at higher doses. However, the higher the doses, the more likely are side effects such as nausea, diarrhea, weight loss, fatigue, and possible liver damage," said Rite Aid Pharmacist Sarah Matunis, R.Ph. "Doctors usually start patients at low doses, and gradually increase the dosage based on how well the patient tolerates the drug. Patients should be closely monitored and report any unusual symptoms to their doctor."

Many medications that show some promise act to increase the amount of acetylcholine, a chemical messenger that sends messages from one brain cell to another. "Other medications being tested for prevention and treatment of Alzheimer's Disease include anti-inflammatory drugs, estrogen, and antioxidants. The latest research even focuses on the potential for a vaccine against Alzheimer's Disease," added Matunis.

Although the exact cause of Alzheimer's Disease is unknown,



### New treatments and research are offering new hope to Alzheimer's patients.

researchers believe that inflammation of the brain may be a factor. Because NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen, naproxen and indomethacin) help decrease inflammation in the body, they may aid in preventing or delaying the onset of Alzheimer's by decreasing the inflammation in the brain.

The success of estrogen therapy remains questionable. However, early research indicates that women who take estrogen therapy after menopause are less likely to have Alzheimer's; and women who already have Alzheimer's and are taking estrogen suffer less severe symptoms and slower mental deterioration. Antioxidants, including vitamin E and ginkgo biloba, may also offer some benefits. They may help brain cells defend themselves from "attacks."

#### Hope for the Future

A decade ago, patients and their families had few choices. Now, more treatments and care options are available, with the promise of more to come. According to Matunis, Rite Aid Pharmacists are specially trained to work closely with a patient's doctor to provide a thorough review of treatment options.

For more information or to find the location of the nearest Rite Aid pharmacist, visit the Web site at [www.riteaid.com](http://www.riteaid.com).