



## November Marks Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month

(NAPSA)—In 1983, Ronald Reagan declared the month of November National Alzheimer's Awareness Month. Today, more than 4 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease, and experts predict that number could double in the next 25 years.<sup>i</sup> Designated both as National Alzheimer's Awareness Month and National Family Caregivers Month, November presents an opportunity to recognize the progress made against the disease and to acknowledge and support the millions of caregivers devoted to looking after their loved ones.

Alzheimer's is a progressive, neurodegenerative disease characterized by memory problems that eventually lead to severe cognitive, functional and behavioral impairment. Nearly half of Alzheimer's patients are first diagnosed in the moderate or severe stages,<sup>ii</sup> when signs and symptoms become more pronounced and behavioral problems can occur. According to the National Institute on Aging, signs and symptoms of moderate Alzheimer's disease can include:<sup>iii</sup>

- Increased memory loss
- Difficulty recognizing familiar people
- Problems with language
- Restlessness, agitation, anxiety, and wandering
- Repetitive statements or movements
- Hallucinations, delusions, suspiciousness, or paranoia

Dr. Martin Farlow, professor and vice-chairman for research in



the department of neurology at Indiana University School of Medicine, advises patients and their families to learn as much as possible about the disease and what to expect as it progresses. Following are answers to some commonly asked questions:

**Q: Can treatments help individuals with Alzheimer's disease?**

A: There is no cure for Alzheimer's, but there are treatments available that may help patients maintain their mental capacity and ability to perform basic activities longer than if they were not treated.

**Q: When should a patient start treatment?**

A: Treatment should start as soon as a patient is diagnosed. If you think a loved one has Alzheimer's, make an appointment to see your doctor right away. The sooner the diagnosis, the sooner treatment can be started to slow the progression of symptoms.

**Q: If someone is already**

**taking one medication for Alzheimer's is there anything else that can be done?**

A: There are multiple medications available to treat Alzheimer's disease which work differently and can be used alone or in combination with one another. For more information, you can visit [www.Alzheimersonline.com](http://www.Alzheimersonline.com) or ask your physician about all available treatment options.

**Q: I feel overwhelmed as a caregiver. Is it common to feel this way?**

A: Among all caregivers, those who look after Alzheimer's patients tend to report the highest levels of stress.<sup>iv</sup> That's why it is important for caregivers to take time out for themselves, to turn to family and friends for assistance, and to join local support groups.

Namenda (memantine HCl) is the only medication approved for the moderate to severe stages of Alzheimer's disease and is available by prescription in the U.S. Ask your doctor about Namenda, go to [www.Namenda.com](http://www.Namenda.com) or call 1-877-2-NAMENDA (1-877-262-6363).

Namenda (memantine HCl) is contraindicated in patients with known hypersensitivity to memantine HCl or any excipients used in the formulation. The most common adverse events reported with Namenda vs placebo ( $\geq 5\%$  and higher than placebo) were dizziness, confusion, headache, and constipation. In patients with severe renal impairment, the dosage should be reduced.

<sup>i</sup> Hebert LE, Scherr PA, Bienias JL, Bennett DA, and Evans DA. State-specific projections through 2025 of Alzheimer disease prevalence. *Neurology*. 2004; 62:1645.

<sup>ii</sup> Market Measures Interactive. The Treatment of Alzheimer's Disease Study X. May 2004.

<sup>iii</sup> *Alzheimer's disease: Unraveling the Mystery*. National Institutes of Health, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services; 2002. NIH Publication Number 02-3782.

<sup>iv</sup> National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP. *Caregiving in the U.S.* 2004. (p.60) Available at: [www.caregiving.org/data/04finalreport.pdf](http://www.caregiving.org/data/04finalreport.pdf).