

The Demands on Alzheimer's Disease Caregivers: Finding Time for Yourself

(NAPSA)—Experts estimate that 19 million Americans are family members or close friends of someone with Alzheimer's disease. Many of these individuals find themselves in the role of primary caregiver—responsible for the daily care and well-being of an individual whose memory, concentration and thinking skills are gradually deteriorating. This role can fill several hours each day.

In the early stages, someone with Alzheimer's disease often requires assistance only with complex tasks, such as balancing the checkbook or managing legal matters. As the disease progresses, however, assistance becomes needed for common activities of daily living, including bathing, dressing and eating meals. Eventually, an even greater level of supervision is necessary to prevent falls, wandering and other potential accidents. As the amount of time that must be devoted to caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease grows, many caregivers find themselves experiencing increased stress and fatigue and reduced quality of life.

New research shows that when those with Alzheimer's disease take medication, their caregiver may benefit as well. During two six-month studies with the medication Reminyl (galantamine HBr) for mild-to-moderate Alzheimer's disease, caregivers were asked to report the amount of time they spent each day assisting the person they care for with Alzheimer's disease. Researchers assessed the time

Caregiver Tips

If you care for someone with Alzheimer's disease, structuring his or her day can be beneficial. The Alzheimer's Association recommends caregivers keep the following in mind when planning activities & daily tasks:

- Determine what time is best for the activity
- Help the person remain as independent as possible
- Simplify instructions
- Offer the appropriate level of support and supervision
- Be flexible and patient
- Focus on enjoyment, not achievement 

spent helping with activities of daily living, as well as the total amount of time that the individual with Alzheimer's disease could be left unsupervised.

Among all patients, caregivers of those taking Reminyl spent 32 minutes less each day providing assistance compared to caregivers of patients taking placebo. The effect was more pronounced among caregivers of Reminyl patients with moderate Alzheimer's disease. This group reported that they spent nearly an hour (53 minutes) less each day assisting with activities of daily living compared to caregivers of individuals taking a placebo.

Looking at all patients, caregivers of those taking Reminyl reported that the patient could be unsupervised for an additional 27 minutes each day compared to those taking a placebo. In addition, caregivers of moderate Alzheimer's disease patients

reported that the person with Alzheimer's disease could be left unsupervised an average of 68 minutes longer than those taking a placebo—again, resulting in more time for the caregivers themselves.

“Data about the effects on caregivers is absent from many studies involving Alzheimer's disease treatments, which makes this research important,” explained Dr. Mary Sano, director of the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, Mount Sinai School of Medicine and study co-author. “Having an extra hour a day can have a positive impact on the caregiver's energy and stress level. Most of us take such personal time for granted, but it's truly valued by Alzheimer's disease caregivers.”

It's also important that caregivers don't try to take on everything alone. Turning to family members, close friends and community resources such as adult daycare facilities can provide a much-needed break and help caregivers carve out some personal time.

Reminyl is used in patients with mild-to-moderate Alzheimer's disease. The most frequently reported side effects are nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, anorexia and weight loss. They are generally mild and temporary.

To learn more about available resources and other tips about caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease, visit www.sharingcare.com. For more information about Reminyl, visit www.reminyl.com.