

RVNA Health Source: Alzheimer's Deaths on the Increase

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Published on Thursday, 15 June 2017 08:43

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President & CEO U.S. health officials report that as baby boomers are aging, deaths from Alzheimer's disease have increased 55% over the period 1999 to 2015. In addition to the aging population, the increase can be attributed to better diagnosis and the fact that the disease itself, rather than proximate causes of death such as cardiac arrest, is now listed more often on death certificates.

Alzheimer's disease is the fifth leading cause of death among people over 65, and is the most expensive disease in the U.S., consuming two out of every five Medicare dollars. The disease is expected to impact more and more people since the number of Americans over age 65 is growing significantly, and age is the greatest risk factor for Alzheimer's. While most Alzheimer's sufferers die in nursing homes or long-term care facilities, the number of those dying at home is increasing, in part due to the high cost of nursing homes. In these cases, the substantial burden of caregiving falls on loved ones, creating stressful situations in which family caregivers can develop their own symptoms of depression and anxiety. This trend of more patients being cared for at home will require additional home-based caregivers, whether family members or professionals. It is estimated that for every person with Alzheimer's, there are typically three people providing their care, especially in later stages of the disease.

To tackle these ever growing challenges, priorities are focused on finding a cure, which the scientific community is working toward with optimism. In the meantime, there are resources to help. Non-medical companions and live-ins can provide important respite for caregivers. HomeCare by RVNA offers these services on an hourly or more long-term basis. In addition, when medical care is needed, look for clinicians who are certified dementia practitioners, meaning that they have specific training to work with dementia patients. All RVNA nurses and therapists are dementia certified. And investigate resources like caregiver support centers and groups, such as those available through RVNA. For more information, call 203.438.5555.

Founded in 1914, RVNA is an accredited non-profit Medicare-certified home healthcare agency that also supports public health and safety, and promotes the highest quality of life. RVNA provides compassionate care to all individuals, whether young

or old, through a continuum of care that encompasses health care at home and in the community. RVNA also provides home health aides and companionship through a non-medical subsidiary called HomeCare by RVNA and outpatient physical, occupational and speech therapy in its Rehab by RVNA facility at 27 Governor Street, Ridgefield.

Visit RVNA at www.ridgefieldvna.org

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