**KNOW AND TELL ABOUT Alzheimer’s**

By

Duane Starkey

The Alzheimer’s Foundation just released a report of a survey from doctors that have examined patients with probable Alzheimer’s disease. This report states that 45% of the doctors did not tell their patients that they had or were developing the disease. This decision to withhold the truth from the patient and their families is really appalling when considering the length of the illness and the financial burdens it imposes.

Now, I am certain that physicians have the best of intentions when they make these decisions when they consider the resulting fatality of Alzheimer’s disease and the fact that no cure or drug/proven medical treatment is presently available.

I have worked with doctors and the medical profession for over sixty-five years and there are certain undisclosed factors often involved in making a correct diagnosis and determining treatment. When the physician is not familiar with the ailment, then he is most often reluctant to treat it.

Neurology and mental health among seniors is basically uncharted and unknown areas for most of the medical community. It is very difficult to admit lack of knowledge and inability to effectively treat these patients. This is further complicated by inadequate sources of reimbursement by governmental agencies and insurance companies. The long term costs of care and treatment often brings financial disaster upon the patients and caregivers. The basis underling truth of the matter is lack of knowledge in both education and training by all parties involved concerning depression, dementia, Alzheimer’s and the ageing process itself.

These diseases rank right next to cancer and heart disease in fatality and costs. The elderly are the primary patients involved and have always borne the brunt of least emphasis and focus in our past and present society. Now that the projected life expectancy has made such marked increase and that fact that the senior segment of our society will be the largest in the coming years, immediate action is required to avoid economic disaster in the healthcare arena.

Many billions of dollars have been expended over the past fifteen years in frantic search to find a drug or medical solution to cure Alzheimer’s or effectively prevent the occurrence. In the interim, emphasis has been on housing and long term institutional care in the various stages of the illness. This accomplishes several things for the providers and the caregivers. Funding and reimbursement is available for the care provider and the caregivers have resolved peace of mind about care for the loved one and the physical and mental stress is relieved. This adult oriented “ baby sitter” solution places the patient in a forgotten but not gone living confinement. You may walker in or wheelchair in, but you will never leave until it is in a hearse. The doctor or the family makes the decision for you or else you make decide out of guilt or desperation. No matter the choice or reason, the final result is often a bitter pill that can take years to swallow.

I have some good news for you now, if you have waded through the troubled waters I led you. **It is possible to delay the onset of depression, dementia and Alzheimer’s and oftentimes reverse the seriousness of it.** This is not some farfetched scheme to get your money or raise false hope. This is hands on, eyewitness, I did it myself testimony. I wrestled with depression, experienced the struggle with memory and mental focus and faced the dread of Alzheimer’s. For the past 15 years, I studied every aspect of these diseases and reviewed worldwide search engines on the internet to learn about treatments and innovations related to them. I studied adult day care centers and served 5 years as owner/manager of several centers. I ministered to my peers and cared for them. I learned that persistent love and attention to an individual can bring marvelous improvements in physical and mental health. I watched those that would not or could not converse become chatterboxes. I watched those in wheelchairs and walkers, walk and dance and help others do the same. I saw despair and isolation change to friendship and laughter.

I also realized that my workers and the patients families did not fully understand the natural ageing process of mind and body and did not know the symptoms of dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. In retrospect, I now realize that some of the patients in the nursing homes that I owned and operated over the years should never have been there. All they really needed was training and education about the ageing process and know that change of diet and lifestyle would have enabled them to maintain independent living for several more years with friends and family. I wish I could have changed all that, but that time has passed. However, it is not too late for me to help you and your loved ones find answers that can change your lives and futures. This paper I have written you is a start.

I am aware that most of the super seniors will not access this on the internet or read this on website. I may reach a few of you and hope you will spread the word.

Please take some affirmative action to reach out to your friends and loved ones. Help them find knowledge and seek training to deal with these diseases before they occur. Preventive changes in daily activities can bring an extended improved quality of lifestyle for many years to come. We learned about cancer and heart disease and how to make changes to avoid or delay the onset. We must do the same in dealing with depression, dementia and Alzheimer’s diseases.

In the meantime I am working on training programs for workers to conduct small group self-help classes and seminars in local communities and homes for the elderly and their caregivers who cannot access these programs on the internet.

Fifty percent of those over age 80 will likely experience the onset of one of these diseases. About 65% of those will be women. Hispanics and African Americans are more likely to experience these diseases 10 years earlier than other races.

**We must act now to help those facing these diseases and prepare you for facing them in the future.**

I ask for your support and seek volunteers to join this war to change the attitude toward the ageing process and generate a senior resolution to accomplish it.

Sincerely,

Duane Starkey