

Skyrocketing Costs of Alzheimer Disease in Canada

Toronto, ON (Jan. 7, 2011) – The cost of treating and caring for an outpatient (non-hospitalized) in Canada with Alzheimer disease increases dramatically as it progresses in severity, confirms a new study.

“Delaying the progression of Alzheimer Disease (AD) will not only significantly improve quality of life for patients and families, but will also reduce the indirect costs and burden to caregivers and society, as the costs of caring for patients living in the community are staggering,” says Dr. Nathan Herrmann, principal investigator of the study and geriatric psychiatrist at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. “This is particularly relevant when we consider that AD is growing in prevalence in Canada, as the number of patients with AD is increasing as the Canadian population ages.”

The costs for treating a patient with AD in the community (those not institutionalized) range from \$367 per month for very mild Alzheimer patients, to \$4063 a month for patients with severe AD. The total cost of treating women with the disease is about 86 per cent higher than men. Contributing factors include more difficulty in accomplishing activities of daily living, for which women are usually more responsible, and symptoms of mental illness.

The research, published in the December 2010 issue of *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, enrolled patients with mild to moderate AD in a three-year, Canada-wide observational study. Assessments included cognition, global ratings and daily function as part of the Canadian Outcomes Study in Dementia (COSID).

Direct medical costs include hospitalization, physician visits, and medication. Indirect medical costs include home care by informal caregivers, such as family and friends, and loss of productivity by both the patient and the caregiver.

“The greatest changes in cost were observed in the most severe group of AD patients,” says Dr. Krista Lanctôt, co-investigator of the study and neuropharmacologist at Sunnybrook. “For patients with severe or very severe AD, the cost is close to \$50,000 yearly. The largest component of total cost was indirect costs such as caregiver burden and productivity loss at higher severity levels, though medication costs contributed the most in very mild cases. For patients with very mild AD, the cost is under \$5,000 yearly.”

The COSID study was funded by a grant from Janssen-Ortho Inc, Canada. The study was conducted between August 2000 and March 2003 in five major regions across Canada: British Columbia, the Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces.

According to the Alzheimer Society of Canada, half a million Canadians currently have AD or a related dementia, and this year alone, more than 103,000 Canadians will develop dementia. If nothing changes, the number of people living with AD or a related dementia is expected to more than double, reaching 1.1 million Canadians within 25 years. (*Alzheimer Society of Canada*)

About Sunnybrook

Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre is inventing the future of health care for the one million patients the hospital cares for each year through the dedication of its more than 10,000 staff and volunteers. An internationally recognized leader in research and education and a full affiliation with the University of Toronto distinguishes Sunnybrook as one of Canada's premier academic health sciences centres.

Sunnybrook specializes in caring for Canada's war veterans, high-risk pregnancies, critically ill newborns, adults and the elderly, and treating and preventing cancer, cardiovascular disease, neurological and psychiatric disorders, orthopaedic and arthritic conditions and traumatic injuries. For more information about how Sunnybrook is inventing the future of health care please visit us online at www.sunnybrook.ca

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