



NEWSLETTER

July/August 2008

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Editorial

This summer edition of our newsletter, which combines the news for July and August,



brings a wealth of information with coverage of the presentations given at the International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease (ICAD) in Chicago. This was the largest-ever convention of its kind, bringing together some 5,000 delegates who were informed of possible new treatments, developments regarding diagnostic testing, best practice and preventative measures for Alzheimer's disease.

Bringing us up to date with the current research news, our Science Watch section includes all the latest research presented at the Chicago conference and the results of current clinical trials on various levels.

Widespread media attention was given over the summer to the development of the drug "Rember". Whilst any drug offering help to the millions of people with dementia is long overdue and hoped for, it is also essential that when reporting on the lengthy and complex process of drug development, we err on the side of caution. Hailing early research results, however promising, as the "pill that halts Alzheimer's", as was done in some British media, raises expectations and hopes of people with

dementia and carers alike. Sensationalism should have no place in covering medical news and I hope that the information we carry in our newsletter is presented in an objective and matter-of-fact way.

August also saw the announcement by the daughter of Margaret Thatcher that the ex-British Prime Minister has dementia. Some criticised the disclosure of this news claiming that Baroness Thatcher was diminished in some way by this announcement. I strongly believe that such criticism only adds to the stigma and lack of understanding which surrounds dementia and instead I hope that more politicians and celebrities will follow suit and openly discuss the impact of dementia.

Three member organisations (Scotland, Denmark and Luxembourg) welcomed new Chief Executives or Chairpersons over the summer and we look forward to working with them in the very near future.

We also bring news of members' plans for World Alzheimer's Day on 21 September. I hope that the scope of these activities will show the vibrancy and innovation of the European Alzheimer movement.

As always, I hope you will enjoy reading our newsletter.

Jean Georges
Executive Director

Making dementia a European priority

Our campaign enjoys increasing support from MEPs with the following pledging their support in June 2008:



Esther de Lange

The Netherlands, EPP-ED



Pier Antonio Panzeri

Italy, Socialist group,

With their support, the number of Members of the European Parliament who have pledged their support to Alzheimer Europe by either signing the Paris Declaration or joining the European Alzheimer's Alliance has been increased to 74. Alzheimer Europe can now count on the support of Members of the European Parliament from all seven political groups and from 21 of the 27 Member States of the European Union:

Austria

1. Ettl Harald (PES)

Belgium

2. Brepoels Frieda (EPP-ED)
3. Busquin Philippe (PES)
4. Hutchinson Alain (PES)
5. Langendries Raymond (EPP-ED)
6. Staes Bart (Greens –EFA)
7. Sterckx Dirk (ALDE)

Bulgaria

8. Zdravkova Dushana (EPP-ED)

Czech Republic

9. Cabrnock Milan (EPP-ED)
10. Kohlíček Jaromír (GUE/NGL)
11. Roithová Zuzana (EPP-ED)
12. Vlasák Oldřich (EPP-ED)

Finland

13. Myller Riitta (PES)
14. Virrankoski Kyösti (ALDE)
15. Pietikäinen Sirpa (EPP-ED)

France

16. Bourzai Bernadette (France, PES)
17. Daul Joseph (EPP-ED)
18. De Veyrac Christine (EPP-ED)
19. Fouré Brigitte (EPP-ED)
20. Griesbeck Nathalie (ALDE)
21. Grossetête Françoise (EPP-ED)
22. Henin Jacky (GUE/NGL)
23. Lamassoure Alain (EPP-ED)
24. Morin Elisabeth (EPP-ED)
25. Onesta Gérard (Greens-EFA)

26. Toubon Jacques (EPP-ED)

Germany

27. Niebler Angelika (EPP-ED)
28. Ulmer Thomas (EPP-ED)
29. Weisgerber Anja (EPP-ED)

Greece

30. Koppa Maria Eleni (PES)
31. Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou Rodi (EPP-ED)
32. Matsouka Maria (PES)
33. Panayotopoulos Marie (EPP-ED)
34. Papadimoulis Dimitrios (GUE/NGL)
35. Schinas Margaritis (EPP-ED)
36. Vakalis Nikolaos (EPP-ED)
37. Trakatellis Antonios (EPP-ED)

Hungary

38. Levai Katalin (PES)
39. Surján László (EPP-ED)

Ireland

40. Crowley Brian (UEN)
41. McDonald Mary Lou (GUE/NGL)
42. McGuinness Mairead (EPP-ED)
43. Mitchell Gay (EPP-ED)
44. Ryan Eoin (UEN)
45. Sinnott Kathy (IND/DEM)

Italy

46. Battilocchio Alessandro (PES)
47. Panzeri Pier Antonio (PES)
48. Podestà Guido (EPP-ED)

Lithuania

49. Dickute Jolanta (ALDE)

Luxembourg

- 50. Lulling Astrid (EPP-ED)
- 51. Spautz Jean (EPP-ED)

Malta

- 52. Muscat Joseph (PES)

Netherlands

- 53. Corbey Dorette (PES)
- 54. de Lange Esther (EPP-ED)
- 55. Wortmann Corien (EPP-ED)

Poland

- 56. Masiel Jan Tadeusz (UEN)
- 57. Rogalski Boguslaw (UEN)

Portugal

- 58. Coelho Carlos (EPP-ED)
- 59. Esteves Maria do Assunção (EPP-ED)
- 60. Estrela Edite (PES)
- 61. Figueiredo Ilda (GUE/NGL)

- 62. Pinheiro João de Deus (EPP-ED)
- 63. Queiró Luis (EPP-ED)
- 64. Ribeiro José (EPP-ED)

Romania

- 65. Winkler Luliu (EPP-ED)

Slovakia

- 66. Mikolasik Miroslav (EPP-ED)

Sweden

- 67. Cederschiold Charlotte (EPP-ED)

United Kingdom

- 68. Bowis John (EPP-ED)
- 69. Hall Fiona (ALDE)
- 70. McAvan Linda (PES)
- 71. Moraes Claude (PES)
- 72. Stihler Catherine (PES)
- 73. Watson Graham (ALDE)
- 74. Willmott Glenis (PES)

European Alzheimer's Alliance

27 August 2008: Katalin Levai, MEP, becomes European Alzheimer's Alliance Vice Chair



Katalin Levai, MEP for Hungary, from the Socialist group, has become Vice Chair of the European Alzheimer's Alliance. She replaces Joseph Muscat who was elected leader of the Maltese Labour Party in June.

Ms Levai is a member of the Committee on Legal Affairs and a substitute on the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.

Alzheimer Europe news

29 July 2008: AE Executive Director's mandate on EMEA Management Board comes to an end

On 29 July 2006, Jean Georges, the Executive Director of Alzheimer Europe was nominated by the Council of the European Union as one of two patient representatives on the Management Board of the European Medicines Agency for a period of three years. This mandate came to an end on 29 July 2009.

Looking back on his three years, Jean Georges said: "Working on the EMEA Management Board has been a real privilege and I was delighted to see the interaction between the EMEA and patients organisations continue to grow in that time. The involvement of patient organisations in making medicines information more accessible for patients and the general public is starting to bear fruit and I hope that in future, patient organisations will also start to play a role in the regulatory process and in the different scientific advisory groups of EMEA."

1 August 2008: Alzheimer Europe Members consult with the World Medical Association's Declaration of Helsinki

Alzheimer Europe was recently invited to comment on the proposed revision of the World Medical Association's (WMA) Declaration of Helsinki. After consultation with Alzheimer Europe's members associations, a number of proposals were made and forwarded to the WMA. These proposals will now be analysed by the WMA's workgroup, who will prepare a final draft by early September for consideration by the Medical Ethics Committee and Council. The revised Declaration of Helsinki should be adopted by the WMA General Assembly which will be held in Seoul in October 2008.

Alzheimer Europe Networking

On 1 July, (Brussels, Belgium) Jean Georges met with the representatives of the Belgian organisation to discuss the preparations for the **19th Alzheimer Europe conference** in Brussels in 2009.

On 7 July, (Brussels, Belgium) Annette Dumas met Chris Ward and Shelagh Kerr from **PhRMA** (Pharmaceutical Research Manufacturers of America) to discuss Alzheimer Europe's political work.

On 7-8 July, (Prague, Czech Republic), Jean Georges participated in a seminar on media relations organised by **Pfizer**.

On 10 July, (Berlin, Germany), Jean Georges met with representatives of the **German Health Ministry** to discuss the possible creation of a European network on dementia ethics.

On 11 July, (Dublin, Ireland), Maurice O'Connell and Jean Georges met with representatives of **Elan** to present the activities of the organisation and to learn about the research programme of Elan in the Alzheimer's field.

On 14 July (Brussels, Belgium), Annette Dumas and Jean Georges met with representatives of the **Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union (PGEU)** for a mutual exchange of views on various European subjects, such as the Commission proposal in the field of information to patients, the European pharmacovigilance system and the respective roles of patients and pharmacists in such a system, as well as the initiative of PGEU in the field of adherence to medicines.

On 14 July (Brussels, Belgium), Annette Dumas and Jean Georges met with Claudia Brugia from **DG Research of the European Commission** in Brussels to present some of the research activities carried out by Alzheimer Europe in the framework of its "European Collaboration on Dementia – Eurocode" project.

On 15 July (Brussels, Belgium), Annette Dumas attended the **Environment and Health Committee** meeting in the **European Parliament** where Roselyne Bachelot, French Minister for Health, presented the French presidency priorities in the field of health.

On 16 July (Luxembourg, Luxembourg) Jean Georges met with Nicola Bedlington for an exchange of information on the **European Patients' Forum** and Alzheimer Europe.

On 26-31 July (Chicago, USA), Jean Georges attended the **International Conference on Alzheimer's disease (ICAD)**.

On 12 August (Luxembourg, Luxembourg) Jean Georges met with Andrew Garvey and Geraint Thomas from **Glaxo-Smith-Kline (GSK)** for an exchange of ideas and an update of Alzheimer Europe activities.

Katalin Levai

Member of the European Parliament



Maurice O'Connell

Chairperson – Alzheimer Europe



are pleased to invite all MEPs to the **lunch debate**

“The treatment of Alzheimer's disease”
Current options and future perspectives
by Alexander Kurz, Germany

16 September 2008

12 :30 – 14:00

European Parliament – Salon des Députés - Brussels

European developments

2 July 2008: French President and President of the European Commission announce EU initiative to have a European Alzheimer Plan



At a joint press conference, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and European Commissioner, Manuel Barroso, announce a French presidency initiative: engage the 27 European Member States in setting up a European Alzheimer Plan.

2 July 2008: EU proposes protection from discrimination beyond the workplace

The Commission has adopted a proposal for a directive that provides for protection from discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief beyond the workplace. The aim of this new directive is to ensure equal treatment in the areas of social protection, including social security and health care, education and access to and supply of goods and services which are commercially available to the public, including housing. The law will prohibit direct and indirect discrimination as well as harassment and victimisation.

2 July 2008: European Commission adopts proposal for directive on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare

Within the context of the Renewed Social Agenda, the Commission has adopted a proposal for a directive to facilitate the application of European patients' rights in relation to cross-border healthcare, as well as a Communication on improving co-operation between Member States in this area. With this proposal the Commission aims to clarify how patients can exercise their rights to cross-border health care, while at the same time providing legal certainty for Member States and health care providers. The proposed Directive provides a basis to unlock the huge potential for European cooperation to help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of all EU health systems.

2 July 2008: European Commission proposes a Renewed Social Agenda

Within the context of a Renewed Social Agenda and its commitment to bring together various policies, the Commission has put forward a comprehensive and ambitious package of initiatives.

The renewed social agenda seeks to empower and equip Europeans to deal with rapidly changing realities, ageing societies and developments such as the recent hikes in food and oil prices and turmoil in financial markets. It also aims to help those who have difficulties coping with these changes.

Altogether, the package contains 19 initiatives centred on the following priorities:

1. Preparing for Tomorrow: Children and Youth
2. Investing in People: Managing Change
3. Supporting Longer and healthier lives
4. Fighting discrimination
5. Strengthening Instruments
6. Shaping the International Agenda
7. Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

We provide full references to articles on our website

www.alzheimer-europe.org

15 July 2008: Janez Potocnik, Research Commissioner, launches the European Commission's Communication on instruments for research infrastructures in Europe

National research has more impact if Member States pool their resources and better coordinate their efforts. In order to encourage the Member States to address major societal challenges (such as climate change, diseases or energy) jointly, the European Commission has adopted a the Communication "*Towards Joint Programming in Research: Working together to tackle common challenges more effectively.*" This initiative invites Member States to identify a limited number of key challenges on which to focus their efforts, agree on a common vision, and then to develop and implement a Strategic Research Agenda for each area.

The Joint Programming will be on a voluntary basis and need not involve all Member States in each specific initiative. It can relate to the coordination of existing national programmes, or the setting up of entirely new ones, pooling resources and collectively monitoring and reviewing progress. The Commission will act as a facilitator and the implementation may or not may involve Community financing.

If the EU Council of Ministers agrees with the proposal, Joint Programming Initiatives should be underway by 2010.

The Communication is one of five policy initiatives planned by the Commission to follow up the 2007 Green Paper "The European Research Area: New Perspectives" and is a further step in the creation of the "fifth freedom" by removing barriers to the free movement of knowledge.

Policy Watch

1 July 2008: German researchers commence new network

The Degenerative Dementias Competence Network is made up of three research groups, that work in a total of 17 German towns. This follows the earlier announcement by the German Minister for Education and Research, Annette Schavan, to create a new level of collaboration between doctors, scientists and institutions to better address neuro-degenerative diseases .

The three main research areas that the Network will focus on are:

- the origin of dementia
- animal models
- early diagnosis, the course of dementia, therapy and costs

1 July 2008: Long-term German care insurance enters into force



The "Long-term German care reform" (Verbesserungen durch die Pflegereform) law has entered into force. Deutsche Alzheimer Gesellschaft will assess the impact of this new law during its 5th Congress in Erfurt in October. In particular, experts and carers will exchange their experiences of the long-term care law on 11 October.

3 July 2008: European Commission publishes study on the situation of social and health services in the EU

The European Commission's final Synthesis Report entitled the "Study on Social and Health Services of General Interest (SHSGI) in the European Union", has been published. The aim of the study was to "collect facts and illustrations to improve the knowledge of both service providers and the European Commission on questions concerning the application of EU rules to the development of social services."

The report is divided into six areas:

1. An overview on social services in the EU
2. Five sectors of social services in focus: (a) Long-term care (b) Social intergration and re-integration (c) Labour market for disadvantages persons (d) Childcare (e) Social isolation
3. Modernisation and the quest for good governance
4. The interaction of Community rules and case law with the evolution of SHSGI
5. Strategies for monitoring and improving quality of services
6. Monitoring SHSGI at EU level: conclusions on methodology

The study highlights the current challenge as being able to regulate difficulties which stem from the interaction between the concepts of solidarity and universal coverage on the one hand, and competition in social service provision on the other.

15 July 2008 : Roselyne Bachelot, French Health Minister presents the French EU Presidency health programme in the European Parliament

Roselyne Bachelot, the French Minister for Health, presented the French EU presidency priorities in the area of health. to the European Parliament committee on the environment, public health and food safety .



The priorities have been identified and agreed by the 'troika' presidencies (the current EU presidency as well as the next two EU presidencies that will be held by the Czech Republic and Sweden respectively).

In addition to the priorities started with the previous presidencies, the French presidency will work to

- improve health safety (by health crisis management),
- promote healthy ageing (firstly by tackling Alzheimer’s disease),
- address patients and family health (including cross-border care, rare diseases, organ donations, antibiotic resistance, patient safety),
- refine health determinants (alcohol, tobacco),
- make progress in the dossiers linked to medicines (reinforce innovation, pharmacovigilance, information to patients, review of market authorizations, IMI).

Ms Bachelot reiterated that Alzheimer’s disease is a health, economic and social challenge.

15 July 2008: Northern Ireland executive calls for public consultations on mental health and dementia services review

The paper “Delivering the Bamford vision” is the response of the Northern Ireland Executive to the earlier Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability. Encouragingly, “by December 2008 develop a strategy for dementia services, including the needs of younger people” is one of the many recommendations in the Vision paper. Nine public consultation meetings on the paper are now being held from 24 July and finishing in Belfast on 18 September. The final closing date for responses is 3 October 2008.

21 August 2008: Review of palliative care services finds “inconsistencies” in palliative care in Scotland

Following the assessment of the provision of care for people with terminal illnesses, Audit Scotland has published their “Review of palliative care services in Scotland”. The key findings were:



1. “There is significant variation across Scotland in the availability of specialist palliative care services and how easily patients with complex needs can access these. People with a range of conditions need specialist palliative care but it remains primarily cancer-focused.
2. Most palliative care is provided by generalist staff in hospitals, care homes or patients’ own homes. But

palliative care needs are not always recognised or well supported. Generalists need increased skills, confidence and support from specialists to improve the palliative care they give to patients and their families.

3. Palliative care needs to be better joined up, particularly at night and weekends. Family and friends caring for someone also need support but this is not widely available.
4. In 2006/2007, £59 million was spent on specialist palliative care. Almost half of this came from the voluntary sector. It is not possible to say how much is spent on general palliative care. NHS boards and their partners need to plan now to meet the predicted increase in demand from an ageing population.”

The Review calls on the Scottish government, NHS boards, NHS Education for Scotland and Community Health Partnerships to address the issues raised in the Review.

Henry Simmons, Chief Executive of Alzheimer Scotland, said “This certainly cannot come too soon for people in the later stages of dementia; who have not enjoyed the same level of access to specialist support as those with other conditions, such as cancer. End of life care for people with dementia could be significantly improved if similar resources and expertise were made available.”

25 August 2008: Guidelines regarding additional care workers approved by the German Ministry of Health

The German Long-Term Care Reform recognized the growing demand for social care for people with dementia in care homes. In order to ensure that this demand is met by the appropriate quality of staff, guidelines were drawn up on the qualification and tasks of additional care workers and these have now been approved by the German Ministry of Health. Additional care workers must receive training (in the form of 100 hours of theory and 60 hours’ practical work) and their tasks will be centred around everyday activities such as taking people with dementia for a walk, excursions, painting, drawing and singing in order to motivate people with dementia in care homes and keep them active.

Heike von Lützu-Holbein, the Chairperson of the German Alzheimer Association (Deutsche Alzheimer Gesellschaft, said “It’s important that the carers are not just left on their own. They must be led by experienced, qualified professionals and be able to talk about difficult

care situations... If suitable unemployed people can be found then that's a positive thing; but above all it's a measure that has to improve the quality of life for people with dementia and not just be a political measure to reduce unemployment."

1 August 2008: IQWiG issues preliminary report on memantine

The German organisation IQWiG (Institute for quality and economic viability in healthcare) issued its preliminary report on memantine and only found limited effectiveness of memantine for people with moderate Alzheimer's disease (AD). The results of four studies involving a total of 1,263 patients were compared and analysed. For various reasons, the institute only included data from 4 out of 11 studies, identified as being relevant, which may have impacted the outcome of the results.

The report found evidence that memantine as a monotherapy had a beneficial effect on activities of daily living for people with moderate but not severe AD. This was also the case for patients taking memantine as an add-on therapy, for whom it also had a positive effect on accompanying psychopathological symptoms and on the clinical expression of AD. A positive effect on the quality of life of carers and on a few other measures was not found.

The preliminary report is now open for comments and the consultation period will close on 6 September.

30 August 2008: Drug cost-effectiveness threshold to be reviewed in the UK

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has commissioned research to establish if the threshold at which drugs are considered to be "cost-effective" in the UK.

The threshold was set nine years ago and is considered out-dated. This, together with the expected NHS surplus of £1.75bn has given rise to considerable criticism that the threshold is set too low. People with early-stage dementia have been denied access to the drug Aricept as it was considered not to be cost-effective; a decision that was received with dismay from people with Alzheimer's disease, their carers and patient organizations.

The results of the research are expected in January 2009.

We provide full references to articles on our website
www.alzheimer-europe.org

Members' News

1 July 2008: Alzheimer's Society's awareness campaign launched in Northern Ireland

Following their awareness campaign "Worried about your Memory?" throughout Britain in May, the Alzheimer's Society has now also launched their campaign in Northern Ireland. The campaign will provide free information about dementia GP practices across Northern Ireland.

July 2008: The Czech Alzheimer Society introduces project to enable early detection of Alzheimer's disease.

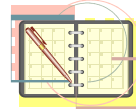
This summer the Czech Alzheimer Society (CALS) introduced the Wednesday-based project "Memory Days" which aims to secure early detection and diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. By the end of 2008, it is hoped that the project, which will operate each Wednesday, will have helped some 1500 people to have their memory tested. "Memory Days" will be held by CALS' cooperating organizations.

Carried out by trained personnel, the memory tests are measured by applying the:

- Addenbrooke's cognitive examination (ACE-R)
- Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE)
- subjective and objective Functional Activities Questionnaire (FAQ);
- subjective and objective Dementia Screening Interview (AD8)
- Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS).

People with positive test results are recommended to see a specialist (neurologist, geriatrician or psychiatrist) from a list of cooperating doctors, upon which there are over 200 specialists.

The project is supported by the Pfizer and the Beaufour Ipsen Pharma.



6 August 2008: Liane Kadusch-Roth succeeds Paul Diederich as chairperson of Luxembourg Alzheimer Association



At the General Assembly of "Association Luxembourg Alzheimer", Liane Kadusch-Roth was appointed as the new chairperson. She replaces Paul Diederich who was a founding member of the Association which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year.

6 July 2008: UK Alzheimer's Society launches Dementia Awareness Week 2008

The Alzheimer's Society Dementia Awareness Week, held from 6 to 12 July, encouraged people to "take control of their lives by making simple changes in their behaviour. In so doing, they can reduce their risk of developing dementia." Various events were held throughout England and Wales and a "Be head strong" guide was published, giving tips for reducing the risk of developing dementia.



Dementia Awareness Week™ 2008

31 July 2008: The Danish Alzheimer Association appoints its new Chief Executive Director



Nis Peter Nissen has joined the Danish Alzheimer Association (Alzheimerforeningen) as its Executive Director.

Prior to his appointment, Nis Peter Nissen MA (History), MPA, was responsible for the Department of Web and Development in one of the five Administrative Regions in Denmark. He was central to the creation of Denmark's first information centre for environment and health issues and has worked with the Danish Red Cross and the M.S. Danish Association for International Cooperation.

11 August 2008: Henry Simmons succeeds Jim Jackson as the Chief Executive of Alzheimer Scotland

Following the retirement of Jim Jackson, Alzheimer Scotland has welcomed Henry Simmons as its new Chief Executive.

Acknowledging the achievements of Alzheimer Scotland, Henry said "You only need to look at



the level of priority being placed on the needs of people with dementia by the new Scottish Government to understand how effective the organisation has been.

This is a real credit to the work of Jim Jackson (pictured right) and all the staff, members and volunteers involved in Alzheimer Scotland."



He went on to say "I aim to build on that work and to make sure that we use this platform to take the organisation forward and maximise every opportunity we have to improve the lives, services, support and recognition of people with dementia and their carers."

Henry has an MBA and is a qualified social worker with over 20 years of experience working on behalf of people with learning disabilities and mental health problems. Prior to his appointment with Alzheimer Scotland he was the Chief Director of ENABLE Scotland, (a national voluntary organisation dedicated to learning disability issues).

11 August 2008: The Swiss Alzheimer Association announces its position on people with dementia and suicide

The Swiss Alzheimer Association does not take a position on the question of assisted suicide per se, but has called for better palliative care to ensure that people with dementia are not choosing suicide due to a lack of adequate support. The Association therefore supports palliative care which offers a better quality of life and active support right up until death.

Members' Forthcoming Events

3-7 September 2008: Alzheimer's Society's London to Paris bike ride



The Alzheimer's Society will organise an awareness and fund raising bike ride which will take place from 3 to 7 September 2008. The trip starts in London and finishes at the Eiffel Tower, Paris. To take part, participants are required to pay the registration fee and raise the minimum sponsorship. Accommodation will be provided.

12 September – 8 October 2008: World Alzheimer's Day to be highlighted by a series of events in Cyprus.

This year's World Alzheimer's Day will see a series of events throughout Cyprus organised with the Cypriot Alzheimer Association, (Pancyprian Alzheimer Association). Events include:

On 12 September, in Nicosia, a press Conference will be given by the Minister of Health, Mr Christos Patsalides;

On 16 September, all the national newspapers and television talk shows will discuss doctors' articles about Alzheimer's disease;

On 17 September, the Larnaca District committee have a public cocktail event and have invited a doctor to speak, after which there will be a question and answer session;

On 20 September, throughout towns in Cyprus, there will be a distribution of leaflets about Alzheimer's disease and doctors will be present at specified centres to answer questions;

Also on 20 September, in Nicosia, Alzheimer's Day will be celebrated by an open day with doctors and carers.

On 8 October, in Nicosia, the District Committee will hold a cocktail party to highlight Alzheimer's disease.

14 September 2008: Icelandic Alzheimer's Association to hold special World Alzheimer's Day meeting

The Icelandic Alzheimer Association, Félag aðstandenda



Alzheimerssjúkra (F.A.A.S), will hold a special World Alzheimer's Day meeting at the Grand Hotel in Reykjavik on September 14. The event will be attended by the Minister for Social Affairs Minister, Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir (pictured left)

and will include a lecture by Dr. Jón Snædal as well as an introduction to the new Icelandic Day Care Centre Maríuhús which will be opened on 1 September.

15-21 September 2008: The Spanish Alzheimer Association (CEAFA) Memory Bus Project

The Memory Bus is a project which offers "memory workshops", information about dementia and Alzheimer's disease, as well as information about the Associations. It consists of two adapted buses visiting 14 different cities

and is a collaborative project between the Spanish Alzheimer Association, Confederación Española de Familiares de Enfermos de Alzheimer y otras demencias (CEAFA) and Pfizer-Eisai.

17 September 2008: The Spanish Alzheimer Association (CEAFA) to give recognition to people and institutions involved with Alzheimer disease

In Madrid, the Spanish Alzheimer Association, Confederación Española de Familiares de Enfermos de Alzheimer y otras demencias (CEAFA) will present their awards which honour the outstanding work of people and institutions who work in the area of Alzheimer Disease.

18-21 September 2008: The Bulgarian Alzheimer's Association organizes events to highlight World Alzheimer's Day

The Bulgarian Alzheimer Association hopes to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease by holding a press conference on 18 September and a special event on 21 September.

The press conference will be held in Sofia, Bulgaria. The Association will call upon the Bulgarian government to make Alzheimer's disease a priority of their policy.

On 21 September the Association will hold an awareness-raising event in the city centre of Sofia, where they will disseminate their leaflets (with information about leading medical centres in Bulgaria) and there will be music, balloons, food and soft drinks.

21 September 2008: World Alzheimer's Day - The Swiss Alzheimer Association

"Unforgettable Memories" concerts



On 21 September, three exclusive concerts will take place which have been organised by the Swiss Alzheimer Association: I Salonisti and Paul Klee will play in Bern and Yverdon-Les-Bains and the Quattrocento Quaranta Coro e Orchestra will play in Locarno to mark World Alzheimer's Day.

21 September 2008: French Alzheimer Association's Nordic walking event

World Alzheimer's Day will be highlighted by the French Alzheimer Association (FA) with a Nordic walk, starting at the Château in the Parc de Sceaux, near Paris.

21 September 2008: Alzheimer Portugal to celebrate World Alzheimer’s Day with a series of activities

In 2008, 21 September has an even greater meaning for Alzheimer Portugal (APFADA) due to it also being the date of the Association’s 20th anniversary.

In order to raise awareness about Alzheimer’s Disease on a national level and also to promote the wellbeing of people with dementia and their carers, throughout September the Headquarters and Branches of Alzheimer Portugal will organise several meetings. For example, leisure weekends, lunches, fundraising dinners, memory walks and a workshop about Alzheimer’s Disease are just a few examples of the scheduled events.



Also, an exhibition of the movie “Away From Her” will be shown by the Madeira Archipelago Branch. This successful movie illustrates the impact Alzheimer’s disease can have on both people with dementia but also their carers. It was directed by Sarah

Polley.

Alzheimer Portugal “hopes that these activities contribute to make dementia more recognisable in our country and wishes a memorable World Alzheimer’s Day to all the Associations around the World!”

22 September 2008: Alzheimer Scotland’s World Alzheimer’s Day Lecture in Scotland

Alzheimer Scotland will hold its 8th Annual World Alzheimer’s Day Lecture, “Use and abuse: sedatives for people with dementia in care homes” on Monday 22 September 2008 in Glasgow.

Professor Clive Ballard, who is Professor of Age-Related Diseases, King’s College, London and Director of Research, Alzheimer’s Society, will speak about his research on the subject and about best practice for the treatment of people with dementia living in care homes.

27 September 2008: Alzheimer Italia to celebrate World Alzheimer’s Day with an “extraordinary concert” in La Scala.



On 27 September 2008 Alzheimer Italia is organising the Third Extraordinary Concert to celebrate the 15th World Alzheimer’s Day. The concert will take place in the famous Theatre La Scala of Milan with the

Staatskapelle Dresden, directed by the famous conductor Fabio Luisi.

The event will have the Patronage of the Republic’s President, the Prime Minister, the Health and Social Minister, the Lombardia Region, the Province and the Municipality of Milan.

Science Watch

2 July 2008: Study examines the effect of old age on dementia

A study carried out on over 900 people aged 90



and above found that the prevalence of dementia was higher in women than men. Among women, prevalence increased with age after 90, doubling every five years.

Published in the journal Neurology, the research was led by Maria Corrada from the University of California, USA.

4 July 2008: Study examines the link between blood pressure and dementia

Research that has been published in the Lancet Neurology journal monitored elderly patients with high blood pressure to see if those patients who received treatment were less likely to develop dementia than those patients who were left untreated.

Led by Dr Ruth Peters of the Imperial College London, the trial was stopped early as the benefits of treatment (in terms of reducing strokes and heart disease) were obvious and it was therefore considered to be unethical to continue the study. Consequently, it was not possible to draw any conclusions from this study. However, the researchers combined their findings with other studies and concluded that treatment for blood pressure could reduce the risk of dementia in later life by 13%.

4 July 2008: Study examines the link between tofu and dementia

Researchers at Loughborough University, supported by Alzheimer Research Trust, have carried out a study on over 700 elderly people and found that people who eat certain forms of soya may be at an increased risk of memory loss.

Professor Eef Hogervorst, who led the research team, explained that the study was limited in that it did not look at all ethnic groups and called for further investigations into their findings.

6 July 2008: Research examines the link between high blood pressure and the risk of getting dementia in later life

A study which suggests that people with high blood pressure are 600% more likely to develop dementia was released by the Alzheimer’s Society at their Dementia Awareness Week. The Society has listed its top tips to reduce the risk of dementia as:



- Getting active
- Eating a balanced diet
- Watching your blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Not smoking

11 July 2008: Unexpected benefits of drug side-effects found

A study published in the journal “Science” suggests that new uses of existing drugs may be possible after examining side-effects of established drugs. For example, donepezil, which is used to treat symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease, was found to also have the benefits that the drug venlafaxine has, in treating depression.

The study, led by Monica Campillos of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory, Heidelberg, Germany examined the shared side-effects of 750 drugs. Researcher Peer Bork concluded “It (the study) hints at new uses of marketed drugs in the treatment of diseases they were not specifically developed for.”

13 August 2008: Brain degeneration replicated in mouse model

Researchers have genetically modified a mouse model to have the same kind of brain deterioration associated with Lewy body disease, a common form of dementia. They hope that this will enable future research in order to achieve a greater understanding how the deterioration occurs.

Led by Professor John Mayer, Professor Lower and Dr Lyn Bedford of the University of Nottingham, the research was supported by both the Alzheimer’s Research Trust and Parkinson’s Disease Society and published in the Journal of Neuroscience.

14 July 2008: Study examines the effect of nicotine on memory function

Researchers from King’s College London found that rats, which were injected with nicotine, had an improved memory performance compared to a control group. However, Ian Stoleman, from the Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College, warned that the benefits from receiving nicotine were small, whilst the risk of addiction remained. The study was presented at the Forum of European Neuroscience in Geneva.



Phase 2 trials are being carried out on nicotine to see whether it can prevent the mental decline associated with Alzheimer’s disease.

15 July 2008: Study examines the correlation of fitness levels and brain function in early Alzheimer’s disease

A study carried out by the University of Kansas School of Medicine, USA, suggests that physical exercise may stop brain cell deterioration and, in turn, protect against Alzheimer’s disease. Led by Dr Jeffrey Burns, the study was carried out with 121 volunteers aged 60 and over, with 57 of these in the early stages of Alzheimer’s disease.

18 July 2008: Study examines the relationship between tea consumption and cognitive decline or impairment



A study, published in the peer-reviewed journal American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, found “regular tea consumption may be associated with lower risk of cognitive impairment and decline”.

Using participants from an ongoing cohort study called the Singapore Longitudinal Ageing Study (SLAS), the researchers measured participants’ cognitive mental status using a mini-mental state examination (MMSE) and participants were asked about the type and the amount of tea they drank. Nearly 2500 were monitored at the start of the assessment and one or two years later 1435 of the original participants were again monitored. The research was carried out by Dr Tze-Pin Ng and colleagues from the University of Singapore and the Department of Geriatric Medicine, Alexandra Hospital, Singapore.

Limitations of the study were that:

- It was an observational study and therefore possible that unmeasured factors were not taken into account;
- The decline of cognitive function for those participants who were not cognitively impaired at the beginning of the study was not significant;
- The study did not differentiate between dementia and cognitive decline;
- A large number of participants dropped out which may have affected the reliability of the study.

Further research has been called for.

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18 July 2008: Trial shows Dimebon to improve memory and function in people with mild to moderate Alzheimer’s disease



A study published in the peer-reviewed medical journal, the Lancet, found the drug dimebon to improve memory and function in people with mild-to-moderate Alzheimer’s disease. Dimebon has previously been used as an antihistamine.

The research, which was led by Dr Rachelle Doody of the Alzheimer’s Disease and Memory Disorders Center, Baylor College of Medicine, USA, monitored 183 Russian people with mild-to-moderate Alzheimer’s disease who were aged 50 or over. Patients were randomly allocated to receive, on a daily basis, dimebon or a placebo for 26 weeks with monitoring occurring before the study, at 12 weeks and at 26 weeks. Some people agreed to be monitored up to 52 weeks.

Medivation, the manufacturer of dimebon, recently began a confirmatory pivotal Phase 3 trial of the drug.

20 July 2008: Pilot study examines effects of etanercept on people with Alzheimer’s disease

A study carried out on 12 people with mild-to-severe Alzheimer’s disease, found an improvement in verbal fluency following the perispinal administering of the drug etanercept.

Published in the biomed Central MBC Neurology journal, the research was led by

Edward L Tobinick who concludes that larger scale studies on etanercept are needed.

23 July 2008: Study examines the relationship between sound processing and dementia



Research carried out on 313 volunteers from a dementia surveillance research programme found that the participants’ central auditory function was affected by memory impairment.

The participants were divided into three groups (a) people without memory loss (b) people with mild memory impairment and (c) people with dementia. Auditory test results were poor amongst the participants with some form of memory impairment, with people with dementia obtaining the lowest scores.

The study, led by George A Gates, has been published in the Archives of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, volume 134, no 7, July 2008.

23 July 2008: Questioning techniques may affect performance on tests measuring the understanding of words

Researchers from Dundee, Abertay and St Andrews universities (UK) have found that the way questions are asked influences the ability of people with dementia to answer correctly.



Often, people with dementia are asked to define simple words like “monkey”, “salmon” or “tractor”. On the basis of a very limited response (e.g. a monkey is an animal), it may be assumed that all other knowledge has been lost. The researchers claim that the poor performance on such tasks may be partly linked to failure to understand the question, lack of precision in the question and lack of support in accessing the information.

Whilst people with dementia may eventually lose the ability to understand words, this research suggests that greater attention should be paid to techniques designed to assess remaining capacities of people with dementia.

The results of this research are published in the journal *Aphasiology*.

28 July 2008: Brain enzyme found to be effective predictor of progression from mild cognitive impairment to Alzheimer's disease

Scientists at Trinity College Dublin (IRE) and the University of Munich (GE) have completed research which indicates that the levels of an enzyme known as β -secretase (BACE1) in combination with certain other markers are an effective indicator of future progression from mild cognitive impairment (MCI) to Alzheimer's disease (AD). BACE1 is one of the two enzymes which play a role in the development of beta amyloid which in turn leads to the creation of amyloid plaques in the brains of people with AD.

Fifteen out of 47 participants identified as having MCI progressed to AD within a period of 2.3 years. It was found that the strongest predictor of this progression was a combination of BACE1 and ApoE genotype.

With regard to the importance of this study, Professor Harald Hampel, one of the lead researchers, stated, "These important findings pave the way for further rigorous assessment of BACE1 as an effective and accurate clinical diagnostic tool, which could significantly improve risk assessment and an early detection of Alzheimer's disease."

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28 July 2008: Large scale studies identify slower decline rate in placebo-treated patients

Two scientific presentations at the recent conference of the Alzheimer's Association in Chicago addressed the issue of the extent to which the condition of members of placebo groups decline over time.

The first study, led by Lon Schneider of the University of South Carolina (USA), analysed published and unpublished randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled Alzheimer's clinical trials of six months or more between 1991 and 2005. He found that patients with Alzheimer's disease (AD) entering clinical trials are experiencing slower rates of cognitive decline than in previous studies. This has implications for the design of clinical trials because if the condition of the placebo group does not worsen over time, it is difficult to show that a particular drug is effective. However, it was also concluded from the analysis that a reliable approach to maximize the likelihood of demonstrating efficacy would be to have a

placebo group of at least 200 people, and to use the ADAS-cog subscale at least four times and in English.

The second study, carried out by Roy Jones and colleagues from the Research Institute for the Care of Older People (Bath, UK), involved a meta-analysis of data from randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled studies of donepezil (Aricept) between 1990 and 1999. They found that people with AD entering the later clinical trials appeared to have a slower rate of decline in memory and thinking processes. The researchers concluded that it might be necessary to increase the duration of clinical trials beyond 24 weeks in order to have a chance of observing a positive effect of the drug being tested.

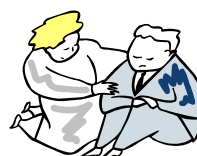
28 July 2008: Problematic utterances during dinner time talk may lead to exclusion

Dinner conversations between 30 people with Alzheimer's disease (AD) and other family members were videotaped and later analysed by Jeanne Katzman from the University of Los Angeles California (USA).

Certain utterances from the person with dementia were described as being problematic, namely those which described imaginary events, were not based on commonly held knowledge or displayed a lack of understanding or confusion. In response to such utterances, healthy family members tended to temporarily pause (which indicated that they had heard what was said) but then to continue talking almost as if the person with dementia had not spoken. Katzman describes this lack of response as framing the person with AD as a non-participant.

The results include examples of more constructive approaches to problematic verbal exchanges and Katzman states that she hopes the research will lead to an improved understanding of daily communication between people with AD and their families.

28 July 2008: The use of "elderspeak" in nursing homes may contribute towards resistance to care by people with dementia



"Elderspeak" is the term used to describe overly caring, controlling and infantilising communication similar to that used with children i.e. "baby talk". A study,

carried out by Kristine Williams and colleagues from the University of Kansas School of Nursing (USA) revealed that using elderspeak

with people with dementia in nursing homes (most of whom were in the moderate stage of dementia) led to resistiveness to care (RTC) and behaviours which disrupted care. Conversely, residents were more likely to cooperate with care procedures when normal adult communication was used.

According to Williams, nursing home staff should be trained in how to communicate with residents with Alzheimer's disease.

28 July 2008: Larger study confirms usefulness of spinal fluid as marker of amyloid plaques

A relationship between levels of the amyloid protein known as Aβ42 in cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) and amyloid in the brain has already been demonstrated by Anne M. Fagan and colleagues of the Washington University School of Medicine (USA). A larger scale study by these researchers, involving a cohort of 132 participants, has now confirmed these findings.

The study involved people without dementia as well as those with very mild or mild dementia. The presence of amyloid in the brain was assessed using PET scans and a marker called Pittsburgh Compound B (PIB). People with a high level of brain amyloid had a low CSF Aβ42 level. People with a low level of brain amyloid had a high CSF Aβ42 level.

As a high level of brain amyloid is generally considered as likely to lead to Alzheimer's disease, these findings are important. The researchers conclude that CSF Aβ42 is an excellent marker for amyloid in the brain regardless of a person's cognitive status i.e. even when the person has no symptoms of AD. The results suggest that it could effectively identify people in the pre-clinical phase of AD.

28 July 2008: Study examines the risk factors associated with dementia

A study carried out by Sylvaine Artero and Pieter Jelle Visser of the National Institute of Health and Medical Research in France (INSERM) and the University of Maastricht (NL), respectively, investigated variables which were predictive of progression towards dementia in a group of 16,261 people over the age of 55 without dementia.

Amongst the 1,530 participants who developed dementia within 15 years, the most predictive variables in order of importance were:

- impairment in executive function (planning),
- memory problems,

- subjective complaints about memory/cognitive failure,
- Apolipoprotein E (ApoE) genotype,
- use of psychotropic medication,
- severe head trauma,
- diabetes,
- stroke and language problems.

Further factors which predicted dementia at follow-up included problems with activities of daily living, smoking, no drinking, no use of hypertensive drugs, low education and female gender.

28 July 2008: New compound proves effective for use in scans



The results of a study into the effectiveness of three compounds to be used as alternative markers for Alzheimer's disease pathology to the existing Pittsburgh Compound B point to the superiority of the compound 18F-AV-45 in terms of rapid uptake and longer duration of tracing capacity.

Michael J. Pontecorvo and colleagues from Avid Radiopharmaceuticals, Philadelphia (USA) found that steady levels of the compound 18F-AV-45 were still present in the brain 50 to 90 minutes after injection which would allow for high quality images to be obtained from Positron Emission Tomography (PET) imaging. Another advantage to the use of this compound rather than the Pittsburgh Compound B is that the former does not need to be manufactured onsite. Consequently, it could be used in community hospitals which do not possess the necessary equipment for the production of the compound.

Although 18F-AV-45 is currently being used as a research tool, it could eventually be developed as a biomarker for the development and monitoring of novel amyloid reducing therapies and even as a diagnostic tool. Dr Pontecorvo announced that Phase II trials of the compound had begun.

29 July 2008: Certain blood pressure drugs may lower incidence and risk of dementia



Researchers at the Boston University School of Medicine have discovered that the use of blood pressure drugs called angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs) is associated with a lower incidence of Alzheimer's disease (AD) and a slower progression in people who already have AD.

Although people who have high blood pressure over a long period of time are at increased risk of developing dementia, this new research suggests that those taking ARBs (as opposed to other drugs to lower pressure) have up to 40% less likelihood of developing dementia. Subjects who already have dementia would be 45% less likely to develop delirium, be admitted to a nursing home or die prematurely.

29 July 2008: Pioneering research into new Alzheimer's disease modifying drug reported at Chicago conference

At the Alzheimer's Association International Conference on Alzheimer's disease in Chicago (USA), researchers from Aberdeen University presented promising results of a Phase II clinical trial of a drug called "rember". 321 people with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease in the UK and Singapore were involved in the trial.

Rember targets the Tau tangles (fibres of tau protein) which form in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease and it appears to be most effective in the regions of the brain responsible for memory. It was found to slow down the progression of the disease with a reduction of up to 81% in cognitive decline.

Professor Claude Wischik, who led the research, points out that this is the first treatment designed to target the Tau tangles which are highly correlated to the disease. Further clinical trials on humans are clearly needed before any firm conclusions can be drawn and also to assess possible side effects. TauRx Therapeutics, the pharmaceutical company funding the research, hopes to begin Phase III trials in 2009.

30 July 2008: Possible association between mid-life rumination and lower risk of dementia



The tendency to reflect over family and work-related problems may actually be beneficial. On the basis of a longitudinal study involving about 9,000 male Jewish civil servants in Israel, Ramit

Ravona-Springer found that the tendency to reflect at mid-life was associated with a lower risk of dementia. The prevalence of dementia was 30 to 40 per cent lower in the group with the highest score for "tendency to ruminate". The reason for this finding has yet to be determined.

30 July 2008: Being single and middle aged may increase risk of dementia

Being single when middle aged may, according to a Swedish study, increase a person's risk of dementia. The study was based on 1,449 people examined first in the framework of a Finnish study when middle aged and then again an average of 21 years later. By the time they were re-examined, 139 people had developed some form of cognitive impairment including 48 with Alzheimer's disease.

The subjects in the study who were married or living with a significant other in midlife had a 50% lower risk of developing dementia in later life. There were differences in risk for people who were single at mid-life depending on the reasons for being single. For example, people who had always been single were at double the risk of developing dementia whereas those who divorced and remained so were at triple the risk. A six fold risk was observed for people who were widowed before midlife who then remained single. These results were significant even after adjustments for several other factors e.g. education, occupation and physical activity.

Krister Håkansson, one of the lead researchers, suggested that the results of this study may be consistent with the general hypothesis that social stimulation is a protective factor against dementia.

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30 July 2008: Rate of progression to MCI appears to be higher than previously estimated

In a longitudinal study involving 1,786 cognitively normal people in Olmsted County, Minnesota (USA), it was found that the rate of progression to mild cognitive impairment is considerably higher than expected. Ronald Petersen and colleagues from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester found that the participants developed MCI at a rate of about 5.3% per year. This is much higher than the 1-2% which, according to the researchers, might be expected on the basis of extrapolations from Alzheimer's disease incidence rates. The rate was even higher for the 80-89 age-group (i.e. 7.2%) and men had almost double the risk of developing MCI.

30 July 2008: Clinical trial shows nasal spray may be effective in tackling neurofibrillary tangles



There is a greater likelihood of people with amnesic MCI (i.e. mild cognitive impairment involving memory impairment) developing Alzheimer's disease (AD) compared to those who do not have aMCI. As neurofibrillary tangles in the brain are early signs of both conditions, researchers at the Duke University Medical Center in Durham (USA) have been working on a nasal spray to combat these tangles.

The researchers, led by Donald Schmechel, have carried out Phase IIa clinical trials of AL-108 (Allon Therapeutics) which is a nasal spray containing an eight amino acid peptide known as NAPVSIPQ. 144 men and women with Mini Mental State Exam scores of over 24 but with reported and measured memory problems took part in the trial. Two doses were tested.

After 12 weeks, the high dose of AL-108 resulted in significant and durable improvements on measures of short-term memory, including visual, verbal and auditory memory. No serious adverse effects were reported and there are now plans to further develop AL-108 for use in Alzheimer's disease based on the positive results with MCI

30 July 2008: Study examines the relationship between insulin and amyloid plaques

Despite people with diabetes being considered as having a higher risk of developing Alzheimer's disease (AD), research has shown that some people with diabetes actually have fewer AD-associated brain lesions than people without diabetes.

Michal Schnaider Beerli and colleagues from the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York (USA), were interested in finding out whether insulin treatment and other diabetes drugs might actually reduce the kind of brain damage common in people with AD. They carried out post-mortem analyses of the brains of 124 people who had had diabetes and 124 who had not. Having first divided the diabetic subjects into groups on the basis of recorded lifetime intake of anti-diabetic medications, they then measured the densities of AD-associated brain lesions.

The analysis revealed that people with diabetes who had been treated with both insulin and oral hypoglycemic agents had significantly fewer amyloid plaques than those who had been treated with only one of the two medications and those who had received no treatment.

The researchers conclude that a combination of insulin and oral anti-diabetes medications may beneficially influence AD-related brain changes.

30 July 2008: Study finds association between persistent use of anti-dementia drugs and longer life-span

People with Alzheimer's disease who persistently take anti-dementia drugs seem to live longer than those who only take medication for a short period of time. This was one of the findings which emerged from a study led by Susan



Rountree of the Baylor College of Medicine in Texas (USA).

The study involved 641 people diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease (AD) at an academic medical clinic between 1989 and 2005. This included 12 participants who never took any medication. The participants were divided into four groups based on the number of years on medication divided by the number of years of symptoms. In the course of the study, 53% of the participants died. Those in the group with the lowest persistency were 2.4 times more likely to die than those in the highest persistency group. An earlier study involving this group of participants revealed that persistent drug therapy was associated with long-term cognitive and functional benefits.

This study has implications for discussions concerning access to anti-dementia drugs and also quality of life.

30 July 2008: Clinical trial examines the role of antibody LY20602430 on amyloid plaques

A study suggests that the monoclonal antibody known as LY2062430 may play a role in dissolving amyloid plaques. The antibody was administered by infusion to 52 people with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease (AD) and 16 healthy volunteers over a 12-week period. An increase in beta amyloid was found in the blood and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) of those receiving the actual treatment. Beta amyloid is usually found in plaques in the brains of people with AD. There was also a correlation between amyloid in the blood and the amount of amyloid plaques in the brain. No side effects were detected in the participants receiving the antibody treatment.

According to Eric Siemers, Medical Director of the Alzheimer's Disease Research Team at Eli Lilly and Company, the results from the data suggest that amyloid plaques in the brain may

begin to “dissolve” after 12 weeks of treatment. Phase III clinical trials are planned for 2009.

30 July 2008: IVIg (immunotherapy) is being tested for use in the treatment of Alzheimer’s disease

IVIg is a drug which is currently used in the treatment of people with primary immunodeficiency disorders. However, it is possible that the antibodies contained in IVIg might bind to the beta amyloid which is thought to play a role in the development of AD. A six-month Phase II double-blind, placebo-controlled study of its use for Alzheimer’s disease with a 12 month extension study was therefore conducted by Diamanto Tsakanikas, Norman Relkin and colleagues at the Well Cornell Medical College.

Interim results after 9 months of uninterrupted treatment of 24 patients revealed statistically significant and clinically relevant improvements on cognitive and global clinical measures. Some of the participants experienced rashes and a transient drop in blood count but had fewer behavioural disturbances than in the group not receiving the treatment.

A larger-scale Phase III multicentre clinical trial will be carried out soon to determine whether IVIg has long-term benefits and a disease-modifying effect.

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30 July 2008: Study suggests that plaque formation may be reduced by a metal transporting compound

A metal-protein attenuating compound (MPAC) known as PBT2 may help to reduce the formation of amyloid plaques in the brain by preventing beta amyloid from interacting with copper and zinc researchers claim.

Phase IIa randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trials of PBT2 were carried out by Jeffrey L. Cummings at the UCLA in Los Angeles (USA). There were 78 participants with mild Alzheimer’s disease who received either a placebo, 50mg of PBT2 or 250mg every day for 12 weeks. The higher dose of PBT2 led to a significant reduction in the level of beta amyloid and no serious adverse effects were reported.

Larger scale clinical trials were called for.

30 July 2008: A nutritional drink associated with improved performance on verbal memory task

A nutritional drink called Souvenaid has been found to help people with mild Alzheimer’s disease on delayed verbal memory tasks. It also showed a statistically significant benefit in a pre-defined subgroup of people with very mild Alzheimer’s disease (AD).

The 12 week double-blind, controlled study was carried out by Philip Scheltens from the VU University Medical Centre in Amsterdam (NL) and involved 212 people with mild AD who had never taken any Alzheimer’s drugs. No statistically significant improvement on the modified ADAS-cog measure was detected. However, a greater effect of Souvenaid™ was observed for participants who had a higher baseline score on the ADAS-cog instrument.

Souvenaid was developed by Danone Research – Centre for Specialised Nutrition and further research on this product is expected.

30 July 2008: MRI scan used to spot amyloid plaques in rabbit model

Researchers at the Robarts Research Institute and University of Western Ontario, Canada, have customised a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner capable of detecting voids (black spots) in several brain areas of rabbits which, on post-mortem examination, turned out to be small clusters of amyloid plaques. The clusters were also in the hippocampus which is important for memory.

The scanner had been adapted with a special hardware to detect structures smaller than 50 microns and to be more sensitive to iron-containing structures. The rabbits in the experimental group had developed amyloid plaques in their brains after having been fed a high cholesterol diet for 2 years. The voids were not found in rabbits which had not been fed such a diet.

John Ronald, one of the lead researchers, highlighted the importance of this study in perhaps leading to the development of a clinical MRI scanner to visualise amyloid plaques in people with Alzheimer’s disease. This would have important implications for the diagnosis and treatment of AD.

30 July 2008: Computer analysis of MRI is used to measure severity of AD

Neurofibrillary tangles, which are a typical characteristic of Alzheimer’s disease (AD), may be measured after a person’s death to confirm the diagnosis. However, a new technique has

been devised which seems to make it possible to measure in vivo the degree of tangles by means of an MRI scan.

In order to do this, they have developed an algorithm which extracts information from a three dimensional MRI scan. This gives a STructural Abnormality iNDex (STAND) score. This was tested on 101 patients who had an MRI scan up to 4 years preceding their deaths as well as postmortem. 90% accuracy was reported in distinguishing MRI scans of people with AD from normal MRI scans. The research was carried out by Prashanthi Vemuri, Clifford Jack and colleagues from the Mayo Clinic, Rochester (USA).

Whilst further research is needed to see whether these results can be replicated and confirmed, it is hoped that the technique might eventually be used for the early identification of AD.

30 July 2008: Scientists develop new technique to measure patterns of brain atrophy

A new computer-based image analysis technique, known as advanced high-dimensional pattern classification, to analyse MRI scans has been developed by Christos Davatzikos and Susan Resnick from the University of Pennsylvania and the National Institute on Aging, Bethesda (USA).

The technique was tested on 109 cognitively normal (CN) elderly people and people with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) over a period of 9 years. The longitudinal progression of Alzheimer's disease (AD)-like patterns of atrophy (shrinkage of the brain) were determined and classified according to age group. Participants in the CN group showed stable patterns of atrophy. Those over the age of 80, as well as those in the MCI group, progressively displayed typical AD-like patterns of atrophy.

Davatzikos highlights the clinical significance of these patterns of atrophy and states that further evaluation is needed. He hopes that this technique will eventually serve as an early indicator of AD years before memory changes are clinically recognized.

30 July 2008: Physical fitness may affect the volume of certain parts of the brain

The relationship between cardiorespiratory fitness and regional brain volumes was examined by Robyn Honea and colleagues from the University of Kansas Medical School (USA).

The study involved 56 subjects without dementia and 63 in the early stage of Alzheimer's disease (AD) aged 60 and over. Their fitness was assessed on the basis of peak oxygen consumption during a treadmill test and they were given MRI scans



and a new neuroimaging analysis technique called voxel-based morphometry. People in the early stages of AD and those with poor fitness ratings had more atrophy (shrinkage) in the parts of the brain associated with memory.

The researchers suggest that maintaining cardiorespiratory fitness may positively modify AD-related brain atrophy.

30 July 2008: Exercise programme may reduce falls in people with dementia

Elderly people living in the community are at increased risk of falling and for people with dementia, the risk is up to three times higher. Megan J. Wraith and R. Arthur Criddle from Western Medicine, Nedlands (Australia) have designed an exercise programme to reduce falls.

33 dyads of carers and people with dementia were recruited for the study. 12 dyads received usual care and the other 21 dyads were given the exercise programme. All had geriatric assessments and various baselines measures of balance, activities, independence and quality of life. In the exercise group, the caregivers were taught the exercises and how to motivate the people with dementia to do them. All participants received eight home visits in the first six months of the study.

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The people with dementia who had done the exercise programme fell less in the first six months than those in the control group but there was no difference in falls in the second six months. However, the exercise group improved their balance over 12 months. The researchers suggest that the exercise programme was effective in reducing falls but that the home visits were important to keep the people motivated to do the exercises.

Dementia in Society

22 July 2008: “Golden Girls” actress, Estelle Getty, dies with Lewy body dementia

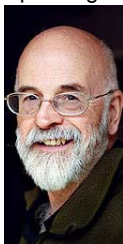
Estelle Getty, the actress famously known for her part in the American sitcom “The Golden Girls” (1985-92), died aged 84, with Lewy body dementia.



Starting her career as a stand-up comedian in summer resorts in the Catskill Mountains, Estelle Getty’s break came as in the role of a meddling mother in the Broadway play, Torch Song Trilogy. She went on to have parts in sitcoms (Empty Nest, Blossom, Nurses, Ladies Man and The Golden Palace) and in films (Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot, Mask, Tootsie, Stuart Little and Copacabana). She was often cast as a mother-figure, which led her to reflect in her autobiography “I’ve played mothers to everyone but Attila the Hun!”.

17 August 2008: Terry Pratchett continues to question the inaccessibility of drugs for Alzheimer’s disease in the UK

Speaking on the television programme “Panorma”, the best selling-author, Terry Pratchett, again spoke of his annoyance at the ruling by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) which effectively denied access to the drug Aricept for people with early-stage dementia.



Mr Pratchett explained that whilst he was told about the drug Aricept when he was diagnosed with Posterior Cortical Atrophy (PCA - which is a rare form of Alzheimer’s disease) the doctor also explained she was unable to prescribe it. Mr Pratchett now pays for the drug, which costs approximately £2.50 per day but explained that he feels “particularly angry on behalf of early onset patients because it feels like an insult and the younger you are the more insulting it is.” He went on to say “It’s probably easier to get drugs off Fat Charlie round the back of the bus station than it is to get medicines – but there we are.”

23 August 2008: Daughter reveals Baroness Thatcher’s struggle with dementia



Carol Thatcher, daughter of ex-British Prime Minister (1979-1990) Baroness Margaret Thatcher, has described how the signs of dementia emerged in her mother. In 2000, she first realised her mother’s memory was failing. Carol said “Whereas previously you would never have had to say anything to her twice, because she’d already filed it away in her formidable memory bank, Mum started asking the same questions over and over again, unaware she was doing so.” In addition, Carol explained how she had to repeatedly tell her mother that her (Margaret’s) husband, Denis, had died, Carol said “Every time it finally sank in that she had lost her husband of more than 50 years, she’d look at me sadly and say “Oh”, as I struggled to compose myself. “Were we all there?” she’d ask softly.”

New resources and publications

18 June 2008: German Alzheimer Society updates training manual for carers



The German Alzheimer Society (Deutsche Alzheimer Gesellschaft) has updated their carers’ training manual. It now consists of seven parts with handouts and overheads.

July 2008: Report on the 1st Brain Policy Forum available on-line



The European Brain Policy Forum was launched by the European Brain Council (EBC) and their first forum focused on Parkinson’s disease, aiming to “highlight the imbalance between the societal and individual costs of brain disease, and the resources allocated to dealing with the problem, and to help build a coordinated European research strategy to tackle it better in future.”

24 July 2008: Evaluation of the Public Health Programme published

An interim evaluation of the 2003-2008 European Public Health Programme has been made available on-line in 22 languages.

1 August 2008: Online magazine looks at how dementia is perceived in different cultures

DeSS orientiert (Dementia Support Stuttgart Orientated) is an online magazine published twice a year by the German Federal Ministry for the Family, Seniors, Women and Young People. In their August 2008 edition, the focus of the magazine was how dementia is perceived in different cultures, in particular, what meaning dementia has in non-western cultures and what the west can learn from this perspective.

12 August 2008: Presentations available on-line from EU high-level mental health conference

The presentations made at the EU conference “Together for mental health and well-being” which took place in Brussels on 13 June are now available on line.

25 August 2008: The Swiss Alzheimer Association publishes a diagnostic treatment and care brochure with recommendations.



The Swiss Association has published a brochure on the diagnostic treatment and care of people with Alzheimer’s disease together with recommendations. The brochure is the result of collaboration between some 50 Swiss specialists, including psychiatrists, geriatricians and neuropsychologists. It can be downloaded from their website (www.alzh.ch).

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AE Calendar

The following meetings will be attended by representatives of Alzheimer Europe:

Date	Meeting	AE Representative
1 September	European Federation of Unpaid Parents and Carers at Home (FEFAF) (Brussels, Belgium)	Annette Dumas
1 September	European Dementia Ethics Network, German Health Ministry (Berlin, Germany)	Jean George and Dianne Gove
3-4 September	European Geriatric Medicine Society (EUGMS) conference (Copenhagen, Denmark)	Jean Georges
11 September	EFPIA European Think tank (Brussels, Belgium)	Annette Dumas
16 September	European Patients’ Forum Manifesto Launch (Brussels, Belgium)	Annette Dumas
19 September	Danish Dementia Nurses Conference “Scientific Dementia News” (Nyborg, Denmark)	Jean Georges
18-19 September	World Psychiatric Association Workshop on Ethics and Capacity (Prague, Czech Republic)	Dianne Gove
29 September	Health Advisory Board (GSK) (London, UK)	Jean Georges
30 September	Aide et Répit meeting on a new approach to the care of dependant	Annette Dumas

	people in their own home (Chamalières, France)	
30 October	EMA working Party with Patient organisations (London, UK)	Jean Georges
2-4 October	3rd National Alzheimer’s Conference (Vigo, Spain)	Maurice O’Connell
10 October	Europa Bio Patients Advisory Group Meeting (Brussels, Belgium)	Annette Dumas
13-14 October	General Meeting of Innomed (Basel, Switzerland)	Jean Georges
18 October	Seminar on Grandchildren and Grandparents (Bradford, England)	Dianne Gove
30-31 October	French Presidency Conference (Paris, France)	Alzheimer Europe Board and Staff

Future Conferences

Dates	Meeting	Place
1-3 September	“Celebrating Innovation and Making Change Happen” International Conference www.dementiashop.co.uk	Stirling, Scotland
3-5 September	6th International Conference on Frontotemporal Dementias www.ftd2008.org	Rotterdam, Netherlands
17-19 September	1st Conference: Clinical Trials on Alzheimer’s disease http://www.ctad.fr/	Montpellier, France
9-11 October	5th Congress for the German Alzheimer Association (Alzheimer Gesellschaft) www.ctw-congress.de/alzheimer	Erfurt, Germany
11 October	9th International conference and Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s Disease http://www.kenes.com/adpd/	Prague, Czech Republic
16 October	6th International Congress on Mental Dysfonctions and Other Non-Motor features in Parkinson’s Disease http://www.kenes.com/pdment2008/	Dresden, Germany
23 October	The 2nd World Congress on Controversies in Neurology (CONy) http://comtecmed.com/cony/2008/Default.aspx	Athens, Greece
30-31 October	French EU Presidency conference on Alzheimer’s disease: Europe against Alzheimer’s disease http://www.eu2008.fr/PFUE/lang/en/accueil/PFUE-10_2008/PFUE-30.10.2008/L_Europe_contre_la_maladie_d_Alzheimer	Paris, France
25 March 2009	24th Conference of Alzheimer’s Disease International http://www.adi2009.org	Singapore
26 May 2009	9e Colloque de la Société des Neurosciences www.neurosciences.asso.fr	Bordeaux, France
28-30 May 2009	The 19th Alzheimer Europe Conference www.alzheimer2009.eu	Brussels, Belgium
11 June 2009	The 5th Kuopio Alzheimer Symposium www.uku.fi/alz2009	Kuopio, Finland
5 July 2009	19th World Congress of Gerontology http://www.gerontologyparis2009.com/site/view8.php	Paris, France
27 August 2009	1st international Congress on Clinical Neuroepidemiology www.neuro2009.com	Munich, Germany
24 October 2009	19th World congress of Neurology http://www.wcn2009bangkok.com/index.cfm	Bangkok, Thailand