

# ALZ

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Newsletter of the Alzheimer's Disease Association



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**ADA**  
ALZHEIMER'S  
DISEASE  
ASSOCIATION

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Medical News

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# Editorial

Hello everyone, and welcome back. This is the first issue for the financial year, with another out at the end of the year. Although the frequency of our newsletter may be two issues per year, (unless we have sponsors for the publication to print more issues), there will still be other means of obtaining information about what's happening in ADA including leaflets, flyers and the website. We'll keep you updated on events over the year.

There has been a focus on Alzheimer's dementia over the past few weeks, following the death of the former American President Ronald Reagan. On 5th November 1994 President Reagan bravely revealed his diagnosis to the American public in order to promote greater awareness and to encourage a clearer understanding of the individuals and families that are affected by Alzheimer's disease. He ended his speech by saying "I now begin the journey that will lead me into the sunset of my life."

At the very least, the publicity has led to renewed interest in the problems of the aged, in particular the elderly afflicted with Alzheimer's disease. This is good news

since it means that issues and problems that the community faces in dementia care can be brought to the fore.

Among the issues addressed in the local media included articles on nursing homes, needs of the elderly, social welfare and abandonment issues, and government involvement.

There has also been interest on the part of the government on issues in geriatric disorders, including health and management. One outcome has been the setting up of a task force to explore needs of the elderly community and to offer training and education schemes for health-care workers and for care-givers of such people.

Along with the local focus on the elderly community, there has also been a focus on the international level. With the growing elderly population globally, there has been a renewed push to establish guidelines in management of the elderly in the areas of health, functional independence, welfare and dignity. This has led to the initiative led by Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) to write to the governments of its member countries to highlight general

issues of Alzheimer's disease and specific issues of that country. The aim is to bring to the attention of governments the needs of the Alzheimer's disease community. 'No time to lose' - the campaign for this year's World Alzheimer's Day - is an urgent reminder to everyone that there is no time to lose as the numbers of people with dementia around the world is rising dramatically. There are currently 18 million in the world with dementia.

The campaign aims to put dementia on everyone's agenda by calling people with dementia and their families, medical professionals, Alzheimer associations, the general public and governments into action.

To those whose spouse, parent or relative has been newly diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, we are here to offer help and guidance, and someone to talk to when life gets difficult. Stay strong.

Just drop a line to our e-mail address or join our Carers Support Group sessions.

*The Editor*

## 7th Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting of Alzheimer's Disease International

The regional meeting, hosted by the Lanka Alzheimer Foundation, was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 13th & 14th March 2004 and attended by 29 representatives from the Alzheimer's Associations of Australia, India, Japan, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand and Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI).

The programme over the two days consisted of presentations by the various Associations on their major focus of work, their main challenges and priorities over the following year, including:

- India – Getting government recognition and funding for dementia care.
- Japan - Support for younger people with dementia
- Pakistan – Creating awareness of dementia, starting with doctors.
- Sri Lanka - Priorities of dementia care versus poverty.

There were also workshop discussions with paper presentations on :-

- Fund-raising by Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Singapore;
- Making dementia a health priority by Japan, Pakistan and Singapore, and
- Professionalising your Association by Australia, Taiwan and ADI.

The Consensus Statement on Dementia developed at two Asia-Pacific Regional Meetings held in Singapore in 1999 and 2000 were revisited and where public awareness, caregiver support and training of professionals were identified as areas of attention for the region.

Participants were informed of World Alzheimer's Day 2004 with the theme "No time to lose". In advocating dementia a health priority, ADI will be writing to the Ministers for Health of its members' associations with a key message. It would also be hosting a reception in London for ambassadors of countries represented by the ADI membership.



*Ms Elizabeth Rimmer, Executive Director of ADI, lighting a candle at the Opening Ceremony*

# At Our New Horizon Centres

## “Neuro-Recall”

“Neuro-Recall” is a group of four youths from Kaki Bukit Centre Prisons School who had been selected to take part in the Citibank-YMCA “Youth for Causes Programme”. This programme is aimed at encouraging community leadership and social entrepreneurship among youths. It is a community initiative by Citibank Singapore and the YMCA of Singapore, funded by the New York-based Citigroup Foundation.



The project proposed by the youths from Kaki Bukit Centre Prisons School is to create games and activities on a CD-ROM that will help the elderly with memory difficulties. This group had chosen the Alzheimer's Disease Association (ADA) as the benefiting organization to support.

The CD will contain games related to reminiscence, recall and sequencing, pictures matching etc. and will be specially designed to help the elderly remember things in a challenging and creative way.

ADA will raise funds by selling this CD to carers of elderly clients, elder care organizations and other related services. We hope you will give “Neuro-Recall” and ADA your full support when the CD is on sale in Aug 2004.

Enquires for orders for the CD can be made with ADA via email: [alzheimers.tp@pacific.net.sg](mailto:alzheimers.tp@pacific.net.sg)

## Management Committee Members 2004/2005

The Association's 14th Annual General Meeting was held on 6 April 2004.

The following members were elected :

President	Dr Ang Peng Chye
Vice-President	Dr Ng Li Ling
Hon. Secretary	Mr Chua Eng Chiang
Hon. Treasurer	Mr Jason Foo
Officer i/c Professional Practice	Dr Ong Pui Sim
Officer i/c Personnel	Ms Ting Mei Sing
Committee Members	Ms Linda Chua Dr Adeline Chuo Mr Christopher Gabriel Mr Lee Keok Kee Dr Suresh Sahadevan Ms Seng Boon Kheng Mr Donald Yeo

Dr Ang in his address to members at the AGM informed of two new initiatives that ADA would be embarking in 2004/2005 namely a model for early stage dementia care at its New Horizon Centre (Toa Payoh) and an outreach programme providing information and education to the community on dementia targeting especially at family carers.

## Music and Movement

As part of staff development, an in-house workshop on music and movement activities for the elderly with dementia was organized on 8 May 2004. It was attended by 17 staff members and included our Centre Managers, nursing staff, therapist, therapy aides, drivers and health care attendants.

Each Centre demonstrated their group exercise activity that they carry out daily with their clients and also gained new ideas in applying different rendition of English, Chinese and Malay music to movements and the use of ‘homemade’ instruments using recycled items.



*Experiencing music and movements at the workshop*

## Visitors

New Horizon Centre (Tampines) which provides integrated care for the elderly with strokes and the elderly with dementia were one of the Centres selected by the Ministry of Health for a visit by a group of health personnel (managerial doctors, neurologists, nurses, therapists and social workers) from Indonesia to learn how Singapore establishes its promotion, prevention, curative and rehabilitation programme. Vascular dementia accounts for about 20% of all cases of dementia.

The Indonesians are now in progress to establish their second community hospital aimed for stroke patients. This project is part of their National Programme for Stroke and will become a model for other regions in Indonesia.



*Our overseas visitors being shown around the Centre*

## In Appreciation

Three staff members received the Long Service Award from Dr Ang Peng Chye, President of the Alzheimer's Disease Association at the annual Staff-Volunteer appreciation gathering. They were Mdm Tan Ah Tin, Health Care Assistant, New Horizon Centre (Bukit Batok), Mdm Silvarani Muthukarappan and Mdm Dharmalingam Maigah, both Nursing Aides from New Horizon Centre (Toa Payoh).



*Mdm Tan Ah Tin receiving her Long Service Award from Dr Ang Peng Chye*



*Staff and volunteers enjoying themselves at a game*

# Reaching out to the Community

During the past few months, the Association and its New Horizon Centres participated in the following activities which aimed to create greater awareness of Alzheimer's disease, the work of ADA and where people can go to for help.....

## Community Health Fair :

Organised by the South West Community Development Council, the Health Fair, held at The Harbour Front Centre, attracted 20,000 visitors over the weekend of 28 and 29 Feb 2004. Besides exhibition booths, there were also health screening, dental check-ups and healthy cooking demonstration.



*Spreading our cause at the Community Health Fair*

## Social Service Awareness Fair :

The HDB Hub Atrium at Toa Payoh was a hive of activity over the weekend of 20 and 21 May where 17 social service agencies in Central Singapore District showcased their services and programmes to create awareness and educate the public on social services



*Mayor Heng Chee How at our booth*



*Attending to an enquiry*

## Students' Community Involvement cum Service Learning

Two schools, Dunman High School and St Joseph's Institution, selected ADA for their students' community involvement-cum-service learning project where students had the opportunity to experience community service through a process which engaged students to assess the needs of the community, and plan and execute a programme to support the identified needs.

Secondary Four students from two classes of the Gifted Education Programme at Dunman High organized a fundraising event on 6 May at their school through a jumble sale. They had earlier visited the New Horizon Centre (Toa Payoh) to learn more about Alzheimer's disease and spent half a day interacting with the clients at the Centre. Some of our clients were at the school's jumble sale to demonstrate their arts and crafts skills and to distribute pamphlets to the students.



*At Dunman High School*



Our Association was invited to participate in both of these Fairs where we had a booth displaying information on Alzheimer's disease and the services we offer. Information pamphlets were also distributed to members of the public. We took the opportunity to raise funds by selling arts and crafts items made by our clients. Both of our booths at these Fairs were visited by the Guests-of-Honour, namely Mdm Halimah Yacob, Member of Parliament for Jurong GRC and Mr Heng Chee How, Mayor for Central Singapore District, respectively.

It was fun and games for 27 clients from our 3 New Horizon Centres who were at St Joseph's Institution on 11 June for a games carnival. There was a great sense of inter-generational bonding as both a class of Secondary 3 students and our clients mingled together.

*At St. Joseph's Institution*



# Tips for Caregivers

## The personal and emotional stress of caregiving and looking after yourself

Alzheimer's disease not only affects the person with dementia, it affects the entire family. The greatest burden is placed on the caregiver. The personal and emotional stress of caring for a person with dementia are enormous and you need to plan ways of coping with the disease for the future. Understanding your emotions will help you successfully cope with the person's problems as well as your own. You are an important person in the life of the person with dementia. Without you, the person would be lost. This is why it is essential to take care of yourself.

The emotions and needs faced by caregivers include grief, guilt, anger, embarrassment, loneliness, family support, sharing problems, taking time out, knowing your limits, not blaming yourself and seeking and taking advice.

Below are some pointers

### Know your limits

*"Be aware of how much you can take, and seek help if caring becomes too much for you."*

How much can you take before it becomes too much? Looking after someone with dementia is a demanding role, which may be complicated by:

- your own physical or health problems
- lack of sleep

- financial uncertainty.

Most people will come to realise how much they can take before caring becomes too demanding. If your situation is too much to bear, take action, seek additional support, and call for help to prevent or avoid a crisis.

### Seeking and taking advice

*"Learning to seek and take advice can help you be a better caregiver."*

Learning to accept help may be new to you.

Support group for caregivers can be a source of help for you. They provide an opportunity to get together with other caregivers, who may already have experienced the problems you are facing. Through their combined experience, the support group can be an invaluable source of help, comfort and encouragement.

### Grief

*"Try to accept that feelings of guilt are a natural response to the situation."*

Because of Alzheimer's disease, you may feel that you have lost a companion, friend or parent, and grieve for the way they used to be. Many caregivers find themselves shifting between hope and despair, thinking the person may get better, then knowing they will not. Also, because dementia is

progressive, just when you think you have adjusted, the person may change again. It may be devastating when the person no longer recognises you.

Try to focus on what makes life as pleasant as possible for you both, and look for the parts of the person's personality that still remain.

Sharing your feelings with family, friends and other caregivers is one way of coping with the grief.

### Not blaming yourself

*"Dementia is no one's fault, the disease is the cause."*

Do not blame yourself or the person with dementia for the problems you encounter. This is particularly hard if the person cannot remember who you are or if they are violent. Remember the disease is the cause not the person.

If you feel your relationships with friends and family are fading, don't blame them or yourself. Try to find what is causing the breakdown and discuss it with your friends and family. These relationships can be a valuable source of support for you and the person with dementia.

*(Adapted from Alzheimer's Disease International website on 'Help for Caregivers')*

## A Carer's Story

Maria gave up her job to devote full time in caring for her mother who has vascular dementia, seeing to her medical and daily needs. It is not easy looking after people with dementia as they present with behaviours such as hallucinations, repetitive behaviours and forgetfulness. She comments that "...being a caregiver is mentally stressful because your loved one will always repeat the same question, day in and day out".

Nonetheless, Maria has learnt to cope with her mother's behaviour using creative ways because her mother presents different behaviours in different situations. She looks upon each day as experiencing "something new" and has learnt how to manage her mother and listen to her. Maria finds little glimpses of joy when she sees her mother singing and clapping along whilst watching television and telling different stories. She believes that "... each day is always different. Love the person you are looking after because the person does not wish to be this way".

Maria believes that it is very important to receive support from respite care such as a daycare service, and having friends and siblings to talk to can make a difference. Maria chanced upon a poster outside New Horizon Centre (Toa Payoh) on a public forum on dementia. Since then, she has made it a point to gain information on caring for a person with dementia by attending regularly the Alzheimer's Disease Association's Carers' Support Group whilst her mother attends daily sessions at the New Horizon Centre (Toa Payoh).

## Carers Support Group

The Alzheimer's Disease Association runs a monthly Carers Support Group (except in June and December). Sessions are conducted in English with a talk on a dementia-related topic followed by a discussion and sharing session. Light refreshments will be provided.

### SCHEDULE FOR JULY TO NOV 2004

Date	Title of Talk	Speaker
10 July 2004	Medications in Dementia	Ms Christina Lim Pharmacist Tan Tock Seng Hospital
21 Aug 2004	Managing Behavioural Problems	Dr Joshua Kua Psychogeriatrician Institute of Mental Health
11 Sept 2004	Food and Dementia	Ms Lim Yen Peng Dietician Tan Tock Seng Hospital
9 Oct 2004	Communication in Dementia	Ms Ambelorfam Manikam Lecturer Nanyang Polytechnic
20 Nov 2004	Relaxation Therapy	Ms Sophie Chua Occupational Therapist Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Venue: New Horizon Centre(Toa Payoh),

Blk 157, Lorong 1, Toa Payoh, #01-1195

Time: 3pm to 5pm. Carers are kindly requested to arrive by 2.45pm

Call: Tel : 6 3538734 to register. No payment is required.

# Medical News

## Drug treatment now available for moderate to severe Alzheimer's

There have not been many pharmaceutical options for patients in the moderately severe to severe stage of Alzheimer's disease. A new drug now in the market, Memantine, an agent in the new class of NMDA (N-methyl-D-aspartate) receptor antagonist, has demonstrated significant functional, cognitive and global improvements among this patient group. About 75 percent of the treatment costs can be attributed to severe stage Alzheimer's. [*Psychogeriatrics* 2001; 3; 189-193] In a 28-week, randomized controlled trial of 252 U.S. patients, memantine 20 mg daily therapy was associated with slower clinical deterioration: patients receiving active therapy either improved or stabilized in their cognition (P =.0003) and ability to perform activities of daily living (P =.003) compared to placebo. [*N Engl J Med* 2003;348:1333-1341]

This translates into greater independence for the patient, reduced caregiver burden and delayed institutionalization, and hence, lowered healthcare costs. Another open-label study of 175 patients showed that memantine remained efficacious over a long-term period of

52 weeks. [*Reisberg et al, 2002. H. Lundbeck A/S Data on file*] In addition, European data has demonstrated that twice as many patients receiving memantine (61.3 percent) improved or stabilized in global response, function and behavior than those on placebo. (31.6 percent, P =.0008). [*Int J Geriatric Psychiatry* 1999;14:135-146]

While acetylcholinesterase inhibitors are currently indicated for mild to moderate Alzheimer's Disease, problems remain. Many patients are either unable to respond to or do not tolerate this class of agents, due to associated gastrointestinal side effects. Patients with prostate and cardiac problems are also not suitable for cholinesterase inhibition.

The NMDA receptor antagonist works through a mechanism that is different from cholinesterase inhibitors. It blocks the effects of excess glutamate, which is associated with cognitive decline and the pathogenesis of Alzheimer's Disease.

**Edited from Medical Tribune ©2004**

## The positive impact of exercise and behaviour management

A study examining the effect of exercise and behaviour management training for care-givers can reduce functional dependence in those with Alzheimer's disease. In this study, 153 people with AD and their carers were randomly assigned to either a control condition receiving only routine medical care or to another group receiving a daily 30-minute exercise routine (for patients) and 12 one-hour training sessions on how to deal with behavioural problems (care-givers). At 3-months and at 2 years, those in the exercise and behaviour management group performed better on measures of functional abilities and physical functioning.

*Teri, L., Gibbons, L.E., McCurry, S.M., et al (2003). Exercise plus behavioural management in patients with Alzheimer's disease: a randomised controlled trial. JAMA, 290, 2015-2022*

## Loss of autonomy in daily living

A study was carried out examining the loss of autonomy in daily living skills using the IADL scale on a cohort of female Alzheimer's disease patients. It was found that the pattern of functional loss began with taking medication, then shopping skills, preparing and serving

a meal, money management skills, transportation usage, doing the washing, doing housework and finally using the telephone, in that order.

*Lechowski, L. et al (2004). Determination d'un profil de perte d'autonomie dans la maladie d'Alzheimer: Etude sur la cohorte real. fr Année Gériologique, 18 (in print)*

## Development of a potential diagnostic test for Alzheimer's disease

Researchers in Pittsburgh (USA) and Uppsala (Sweden) are currently in the process of developing a diagnostic test for Alzheimer's disease using a radioactive dye (Pittsburgh Compound B). The dye compound works by accumulating in the amyloid in the brain when injected into the bloodstream. The dye is then read using a PET scan.

Source: <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/uknews/#3>  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/3495855.stm>

**The above were edited from the Quarterly Newsletter of Alzheimer Europe March 2004**

## My gift in support of people with dementia...



We welcome your donations to the Alzheimer's Disease Association to support our programmes for the elderly with dementia and their family caregivers. You may send your donation to the Association at:  
Blk 157, Lorong 1, Toa Payoh, #01-1195, Singapore 310157.

All donations to the Alzheimer's Disease Association are tax-exempted.

Please also support our coming Flag Day on Sat, 4 Sept 04 by either volunteering to help raise funds on that day through flag selling or giving a direct donation in support of our Flag Day.

We thank the following donors for their generous donations received between Jan 2004 to June 2004:

- Carla Levi Setia Oetama
- Dunman High School
- Lim Yue Li
- MoeY & Yuen Advocates & Solicitors
- Old Rafflesians Association
- Singapore Island Country Club
- Singapore Turf Club
- Tan Say Hock
- Tham Tuck Wah
- The President's Challenge 2003
- The Shaw Foundation
- Teo Teck Thye
- Wang Tiak Kweng
- Wong Yoke Mei
- Yusup Ngadimin