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Alzheimer's Association commends recognition of Alzheimer's and dementia as global health threat

The Alzheimer's Association strongly supports the call to action in the newly released World Health Organization (WHO) report *Dementia: A Public Health Priority*, which asks for all nations to develop and implement a national Alzheimer's plan, conduct greater efforts in early detection and diagnosis, and increase support of Alzheimer's disease research.

The Alzheimer's Association is pleased that the WHO, in partnership with Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI), has released its first-ever major report on Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Alzheimer's and dementia affects more than **35 million people worldwide today**, and the report reveals the astonishing fact that today someone in the world **develops dementia every 4 seconds**; by the **middle of the century more than 115 million people** will be affected by the disease.

It is hoped that the comprehensive report will serve to elevate much-needed international attention to the grave health threat Alzheimer's and dementia pose to the global community today and in the years ahead.

"The World Health Organization lending its powerful voice and support to elevating awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's and dementia is very significant," said Harry Johns, Alzheimer's Association president and CEO. "It underscores the organization's recognition that Alzheimer's is a public health crisis requiring urgent global attention and action. These conditions will continue to be a major public health threat increasingly affecting the social and fiscal well-being of the global community until a concerted international effort is launched to combat it."

Already, the global cost of **Alzheimer's and dementia consumes one percent of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**, according to an ADI report. In the United States, the direct costs of Alzheimer's disease to American society will escalate from an estimated \$200 billion this year to \$1.1 trillion in 2050, largely due to baby boomers at increased risk for developing the disease as they age. In addition

to the \$200 billion dollars in care costs largely borne by government programs, Medicare and Medicaid, more than 15 million family members and friends provide unpaid care valued at \$210 billion.

The new report urges countries to take a public health approach to addressing the Alzheimer's and dementia crisis while developing and strengthening policies that improve the quality of life for those living with Alzheimer's. Other goals included strong surveillance systems that allow for earlier detection of dementia and a stronger commitment to support scientific research that could one day lead to effective treatments that could stem the crisis.

The report discusses efforts in countries throughout the world to develop national plans, including highlighting the steps that the Alzheimer's Association took to mobilize advocates to urge passage and enactment of the National Alzheimer's Project Act. This legislation authorized the process currently underway in the United States to create this country's first national Alzheimer's plan. The Alzheimer's Association continues to work closely with U.S. leaders to shape a strong national plan, which will hopefully serve as a model for other countries. Fourteen countries, including France, Australia, Northern Ireland and Japan, currently have national Alzheimer's/dementia plans.

The Alzheimer's Association has long recognized the international impact of Alzheimer's and other dementias and has made significant contributions globally toward the goal of a "world without Alzheimer's." As the world's leading Alzheimer's nonprofit, the Alzheimer's Association provides premier global forums for the greatest minds in Alzheimer's science to collaborate, connect across disciplines, address common challenges and share new discoveries. This is most notably demonstrated through the Alzheimer's Association International Conference, the largest gathering of Alzheimer's scientists and researchers annually. This year's conference will take place on July 14-19 in Vancouver and is expected to be attended by nearly 5,000 of the world's foremost Alzheimer's researchers.

The Alzheimer's Association International Grants Program has been instrumental in advancing the scientific enterprise and shaping the

ever evolving Alzheimer's landscape. The Association currently fund grants in 24 countries across the spectrum of Alzheimer's research from molecular biology to medical systems investigations and has awarded grants in excess of \$292 million to more than 2,000 projects. In March, the Alzheimer's Association awarded its largest ever research grant — nearly \$4.2 million dollars over four years — to the Dominantly Inherited Alzheimer's Network–Therapeutic Trials Unit (DIAN-TTU), based at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, to enable the program to move forward more quickly with innovative drug and biomarker trials in people with genetically-based, young-onset Alzheimer's disease.

"The Alzheimer's Association applauds the leadership of both the WHO and ADI in their efforts to elevate global attention to Alzheimer's and dementia. It signals an understanding that the knowledge, insights and resources of all nations must be leveraged to confront the daunting public health threat of Alzheimer's and dementia," said Johns. "The Association remains committed to working with these organizations, other international bodies and countries throughout the world to illuminate the human and economic toll of the disease until the vision of a world without Alzheimer's is realized."

Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association is the world's leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's. For more information, visit www.alz.org.