

The cost of Alzheimer's may be more than women can bear

Imagine your life now and in the future. Maybe you are thinking of when the children grow up and leave home. There will be time for travel, a change in careers or just more time for yourself.

What you're not imagining in your future is the possibility of becoming a 24/7 caregiver to someone with dementia or Alzheimer's – perhaps it's a parent, an immediate relative or your life partner.

Here are some sobering facts about the potential effects that dementia and Alzheimer's may have on your life.

- Dementia and Alzheimer's is now an epidemic
- The death rate has increased 66% when compared to other declining diseases
- It's the 3rd leading cause of death in women and the 6th leading cause in death overall
- It can't be prevented, slowed down or cured
- Annual care costs are currently \$172 billion and are expected to reach \$20 trillion by 2050
- For those over 65 with Medicare the cost is 17% of the Medicare budget at \$88 billion
- The cost of Alzheimer's care under Medicare is three times greater and nine times greater for those under Medicaid

What it means to Women Caregivers

- There are 15 million unpaid caregivers providing 17 billion hours of care, 60% of which are women
- Many working women are fearful of losing their jobs if they report having to ask for time off to care for someone with Alzheimer's

- 66% of family caregivers report high levels of stress by having to juggle their working hours
- 33% of family caregivers report not working or leaving their jobs to provide 24/7 care
- 50% report greater physical and emotional distress
- 30% report symptoms of depression
- Caregiving covers an average of 8 – 10 years after diagnosis; it may be as low as two years or as long as 20 years

The projected cost of 20 trillion for dementia and Alzheimer's care is only for the United States. There are similar projections for all countries Worldwide as their current populations are aging or encountering for the first time longer life-spans.

As women we will play a dominate role in caregiving whether it be in a paid position or not.

We will face many demands emotionally and physically beyond what government and health care will be able to provide.

Therefore, it is critical that we take care of our own health and understand that the Worldwide epidemic of dementia and Alzheimer's is a disease, the consequence and the cost of which affects us all.

Resources:

Alzheimer's Association 2011 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures; Changing the Trajectory of Alzheimer's Disease: A National Imperative

The Shriver Report