

**Louisiana Pharmacists Association**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about Alzheimer's Disease**

November is known as National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month. Alzheimer's is a brain disorder that damages and eventually destroys brain cells over time. This leads to memory loss as well as changes in thinking and other brain functions. The disease usually develops slowly over time and gets worse as brain function declines, causing brain cells to eventually die. Alzheimer's is fatal and is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States. It is the only cause of death in America that cannot be prevented, slowed down, or cured. Every 67 seconds, someone in the United States develops the disease, with about two thirds being women. In Louisiana, patients diagnosed with Alzheimer's are expected to increase 34.1% by 2025. Early detection can provide the patient with several benefits with treatment and preparation for the future with loved ones. There are 10 warning signs and symptoms of Alzheimer's disease as follows.

- 1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life** is one of the most common signs of Alzheimer's, especially forgetting recently learned information. Other signs of memory loss might include forgetting dates or events; asking for the same information over and over; relying on memory aids or family members for things they used to handle on their own.
- 2. Challenges in planning or solving problems**, such as their ability to develop and follow a plan or work with numbers. Patients might have a harder time concentrating on things such as recipes and monthly bills and may take longer for them to complete the task than before.
- 3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work, or at leisure.** Completing daily tasks like driving to a familiar location, rules of favorite game, or a budget at work have become increasingly harder for the patient.
- 4. Confusion with time or place.** Patients may forget where they are or how they got there. They generally lose track of dates, seasons and the passage of time. They might also have trouble understanding something if it isn't happening immediately.
- 5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships** for some patients who have developed vision problems. Patients might have difficulty reading, judging distance and color, which might cause problems with driving.

6. **New problems with words in speaking or writing**, such as following or joining a conversation or they may get confused and stop while in the middle of a conversation. Patients might also have trouble finding the right word to call things.
7. **Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps**, which may lead the patient to accuse others of stealing and occur more frequently over time.
8. **Decreased or poor judgment** may happen when dealing with money or paying less attention to grooming and keeping themselves clean.
9. **Withdrawal from work or social activities** due to the changes they have experienced. They may have a harder time keeping up with their favorite sports team or completing a favorite hobby.
10. **Changes in mood and personality**. They may become confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful, or anxious. They may be easily upset at home, at work, with friends, or in places where they are out of their comfort zone.

At this time, there is no cure for Alzheimer's disease, however there are five FDA-approved treatments to treat its symptoms. There are four drugs classified as cholinesterase inhibitors. They prevent the breakdown of a chemical messenger in the brain important for learning and memory. They are used to treat symptoms related to memory, thinking, language, judgment and other thought processes. Three commonly prescribed cholinesterase inhibitors are: donepezil (Aricept), used to treat all stages of Alzheimer's disease, as well as galantamine (Razadyne) and rivastigmine (Exelon), used to treat mild to moderate stages. Common side effects include nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and increased frequency of bowel movements. Memantine (Namenda) is also approved to treat moderate to severe stages of Alzheimer's as a NMDA receptor antagonist. It helps improve memory, attention, reason, language, and the ability to perform simple tasks. Adverse side effects include headache, constipation, confusion and dizziness.

The future is very promising in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease, as researchers have learned a lot about the pathology of the disease, which helps in the development of new targets for drug therapies. Identifying these signs and symptoms for yourself or a loved one can be very beneficial in maximizing benefits from available treatments and possibly maintaining a level of independence longer. It will also allow more time in planning for the future. It is important to figure out the best care options, transportation, as well as other financial and legal matters. Building the right care team and support network can increase the quality of time with the loved one because memories matter.

#### Resources:

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**The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at [www.louisianapharmacists.com](http://www.louisianapharmacists.com).**

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