Pre-Budget Submission 2014

The Key to Cost Effective Dementia Care: Timely Diagnosis and Early Interventions

As part of The Alzheimer Society of Ireland’s Pre-Budget Submission 2014, we invite you to support our campaign and call on Government to make dementia a political priority. We are asking for your support this year to:

1. Ensure that the National Dementia Strategy is published, with an implementation plan, clearly defined leadership and lines of accountability
2. Have, as core elements of the National Dementia Strategy, timely diagnosis and cost effective post-diagnostic early interventions
3. Commit to enhancing the provision of education and community based support and services for carers.

The Social and Economic Benefits of Timely Diagnosis and Early Interventions

There are a number of ways to sustain a good quality of life for people with dementia living in the community. The evidence and international best practice indicates that getting a timely diagnosis and the provision of early interventions post diagnosis are core strategies. These strategies have proven not only to be socially desirable but to be cost effective.

Timely Diagnosis In the first instance, timely diagnosis enables the early initiation of treatment (including pharmacological treatment) which has been shown to delay admission to nursing homes and prolong people in the earlier stages of the condition. This increases the length of time before the person becomes dependent on others for care and reduces the costs associated with care. Earlier detection also allows for the opportunity for the person to plan for their future as well as promote awareness and engagement with the support agencies and organisations. This engagement can also help relieve the psychological and emotional impact of caring and provide carers with the necessary education on dementia and caring strategies.

Early Interventions Currently, there are little to no supports or services for people who have just had a diagnosis of dementia. People with dementia and carers have told us that even though getting the diagnosis was traumatic, it was ever more challenging due to the lack of any type of post diagnosis information, support or services. Early interventions aim to incorporate non-pharmacological interventions that are supported by scientific research in order to promote (i) strategies to enhance cognitive abilities and slow the progression of dementia (ii) psychosocial interventions for people with dementia and (iii) interventions to benefit carers which also impacts on the person with dementia. There are a range of early intervention supports that have proven to be effective including providing emotional and psychological support through support groups, information and social groups, non-pharmacological interventions that are proven to improve functioning, quality of life and delay progression of symptoms as well as the provision of education, supports and services for family carers. Based on current prevalence rates, estimates would suggest there are in the region of 15,000 people who are in the early stages of dementia at present. The Alzheimer Society of Ireland believes that a community based response, providing a range of early interventions is an essential and critical piece in terms of moving towards cost effective dementia care.
### Potential Cost Savings in Acute and Residential Care

From the evidence we know that if people with dementia are supported well in the early stages of the condition, it has a range of immediate, shorter and longer term social and economic benefits including:

1. **Enabling the person to live well now with a good quality of life**
2. **Preserving function, reducing disability and delaying the cognitive decline**
3. **Sustaining the carer in their role for much longer**
4. **Preventing crisis and unnecessary admission to acute care and enabling early discharge**
5. **Preventing premature and unnecessary entry to long term care**

If the average length of stay for the person with dementia in acute hospitals was reduced from 46 days (see Table 1) by half, this would save around €10 million per annum. If the number of people with dementia in residential long-stay care was reduced by only 10%, this would be a saving of over €73 million per annum. Early intervention programmes which may reduce falls and incidents in the home could potentially reduce Accident and Emergency admissions, which account for the largest proportion of outpatient care in dementia patients (€2.6 million per annum).

### Key Statistics on Dementia

- **Dementia is an umbrella term which describes a number of conditions that cause damage to brain cells. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common cause of dementia.**
- **There are currently 41,700 Irish people with dementia; by 2021 there will be 67,500 and by 2041 there will be over 140,000 people living with dementia. There are 50,000 family carers of people with dementia in Ireland.**
- **The overall cost of dementia care in Ireland is just over €1.69 billion per annum; 48% of this is attributable to informal family care; 43% is accounted for by residential care; formal health and social care services contribute only 9% to the total cost.**
- **The average cost per person with dementia in Ireland is estimated at €40,500, consistent with per capita estimates from other countries.**

### Table 1: Average length of stay for person with dementia in various care facilities and breakdown of costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Care</th>
<th>Average Length of Stay</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Total Cost Per Annum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acute in-patient and day-case care</td>
<td>46 days</td>
<td>Per in-patient €809 Per day-case €711</td>
<td>€21,089,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric in-patient</td>
<td>265 days</td>
<td>Average daily €339</td>
<td>€38,684,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential long stay</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>Weekly cost €1245</td>
<td>€731,148,816</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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2 All of the projected figures used are at today’s costs and not adjusted for inflation.