

TORONTO STAR

Alzheimer's cases set to escalate

January 4, 2010

SHERYL UBELACKER

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada needs a national strategy to prepare for a tidal wave of dementia cases in the coming decades that could swamp the health-care system and put a severe drain on the economy, a new report says.

The report by the Alzheimer Society, entitled *Rising Tide: The Impact of Dementia on Canadian Society*, suggests that cases of the mind-robbing disease will more than double to 1.25 million within 30 years as baby boomers age.

"The impact of the growth of the population of people with dementia is going to have huge economic consequences," said society spokesman David Harvey, noting projections suggest direct and indirect costs of the disease will multiply ten-fold.

"Today, someone in Canada develops dementia every five minutes; in 30 years, there will be one new case every two minutes," Harvey said. "If nothing changes, this sharp increase in the number of people living with dementia will mean that by 2038, the total costs associated with dementia will reach \$153 billion a year."

The document suggests a number of possible steps to help reduce the impact of dementia, including:

Prevention programs based on healthy diet and physical activity that can delay the onset of dementia by two years, with a potential cost saving of \$219 billion over the 30-year period.

Enhanced skill-building and support programs for family caregivers, many of whom suffer financial hardship because they must leave jobs to look after a relative with dementia.

Assigning a case manager to each newly diagnosed dementia patient and their caregivers, which could help the person remain at home longer and lessen the strain on the long-term-care system.

Harvey said increased funding is critical for research into the causes of dementia and more effective treatments.

The society wants to see annual funding tripled to \$72 million from today's \$24 million.

Carrie McAiney, a dementia expert at McMaster University, said the federal government needs to implement a national framework for dealing with dementia, as many other countries have done

GLOBE AND MAIL

Costs to soar as aging Canadians face rising tide of dementia

Alzheimer's cases to soar in coming decades, say researchers while calling for national plan to deal

André Picard Public Health Reporter

From Monday's Globe and Mail Published on Sunday, Jan. 03, 2010 10:35PM EST Last updated on Tuesday, Jan. 05, 2010 2:41AM EST

The annual cost of dementia is projected to soar tenfold in the next generation, a stark illustration of the impact an aging Canadian population will have on the health-care system.

By 2038, dementia will cost a staggering \$153-billion a year, up from the current \$15-billion a year, according to a report being released today.

From 2008 to 2038, the number of Canadians living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia will jump to 1.1 million from 500,000 today, the new projections show.

Dementia is just one of the chronic health conditions on the rise as the grey tsunami washes across the country. The number of seniors living with diabetes, heart disease, cancer, lung disease and arthritis is also increasing.

Not only will looking after the aging population be financially costly – health already makes up more than 40 per cent of government spending – but it will place a tremendous burden on the health and social services systems and, above all, families providing care to their loved ones.

“We need to get a lot smarter about how we deal with dementia,” David Harvey, government relations officer at the Alzheimer Society of Canada, said in an interview. He noted that when people have dementia, they invariably have other health issues that complicate their care.

“If we don't take steps now to keep people out of long-term care, we will be spending a lot of money and place a crippling burden on families,” he said.

The report, entitled “Rising Tide: The Impact of Dementia on Canadian Society,” was commissioned by the Alzheimer Society and prepared by RiskAnalytica, a Toronto-based consultancy that specializes in risk management.

The report says that the country is facing a dementia epidemic and a “comprehensive national plan” is required to contain it.

“This national plan would prepare for and mitigate the burden of dementia on Canadian society and direct health expenditures toward activities that have the greatest potential to maximize quality of life, support individuals and families, make best use of our scarce health [human resources](#) and reduce institutionalization and overall health costs,” said Richard Nakoneczny, volunteer president of the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

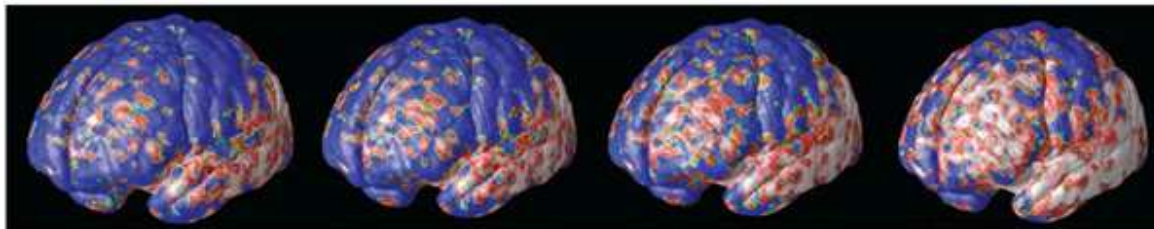
Dementia is already the leading cause of disability among Canadians over the age of 65 and numbers will continue to rise as baby boomers age.

According to the report, the number of long-term care beds will increase to 690,000 in 2038 from 280,000 today. Despite that large jump, there could still be a shortfall of 157,000 long-term care beds, according to the projections.

At the same time, an additional 510,000 people with dementia will be cared for at home in a generation. (Fifty-five per cent of people with dementia are currently cared for at home, and that will jump to 62 per cent.) That will translate into a substantial increase in the demand for community services such as home care, day programs and respite care to backup informal caregivers, the report says.

The story of Alzheimer's

According to a new report, Canada is facing a dementia epidemic and a 'comprehensive national plan' is needed to contain it. Here's a look at some reasons why:



AT INITIAL DIAGNOSIS
(Appearance of white areas represent dormant areas of the brain)

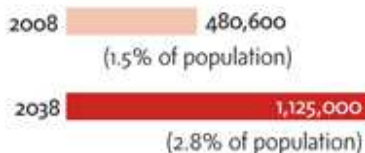
SIX MONTHS LATER

12 MONTHS LATER

18 MONTHS LATER
(Greatest amount of dormant brain activity)

ALZHEIMER STATISTICS

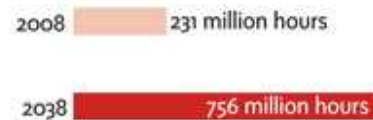
Prevalence of Alzheimer's and related dementias in Canada



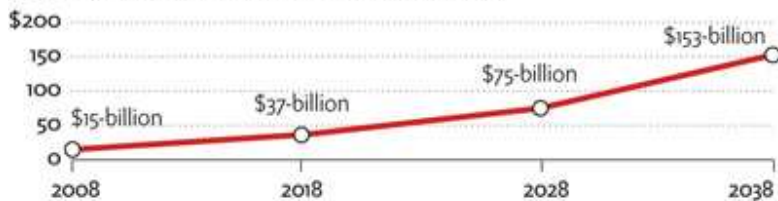
Incidence of Alzheimer's and related dementias in Canada



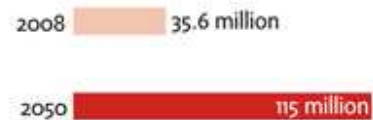
Hours of informal care provided for people with dementia



The economic burden of dementia in Canada



Prevalence of Alzheimer's and related dementias worldwide



THE GLOBE AND MAIL || SOURCES: ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF CANADA, WORLD ALZHEIMER REPORT

Katherine, a 68-year-old Toronto woman currently caring for two parents with dementia (aged 87 and 88), said her story – a senior caring for older seniors – represents the future for many Canadian families.

"We're all going to go through this, so we need to face it now," she said.

Katherine – who asked that her family name not be revealed because her parents could not give their consent – said her parents want to remain in the home but the availability of community-based services is limited.

"I want to respect their wishes but am worried about their safety. It creates quite a dilemma," she said.

The Rising Tide report recommends a number of approaches to lessen the burden of dementia on both families and the economy.

The first is education to promote healthier lifestyles – particularly physical and mental exercise – that can delay the onset of dementia.

The report also calls for a big investment in skill-building and support programs for family caregivers. Caregivers spend an average of 7.4 hours daily assisting their charges with activities of daily living such as washing, dressing, toileting, laundry, shopping, cooking and household finances. About 85 per cent of caregivers are women.

Finally, the report recommends that a “system navigator” be assigned to each newly diagnosed dementia patient. This approach, used in some European countries, has been shown to improve access to community care and delay admission to long-term care facilities.

“Hope lies in making changes today that will lessen dementia's crippling effect on Canadian families, the health-care system and the economy,” Mr. Nakoneczny said.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, followed by vascular dementia and other conditions such as frontotemporal dementia, Lewy body disease and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

Prevalence of Alzheimer's

2008: 480,600

2038: 1,125,000

Incidence

2008: 103,700 new cases

2038: 257,800 new cases

Informal care

2008: 231 million hours

2038: 756 million hours

Economic burden

2008: \$15-billion

2038: \$153-billion