Light at the end of the tunnel

You are in a room. There are other people with you. You don’t know who they are or what they are doing there. You don’t even know what YOU are doing there. They are laughing and talking. Every once in a while someone talks AT you, but mostly they are talking to each other. Every once in a while you hear a familiar voice but then it escapes you. They try to ask you “do-you-remember” questions. They try to ask you if you know their names. You can’t answer. Then they tell you who they are—your wife, your mother, your children! You want to believe it, you search their faces with your eyes, but they are strangers to you. But inside you are screaming, trying to tell them, but why won’t it come out your mouth how you are saying it in your brain? They walk away, they keep talking but they don’t realize how this has affected you. You are upset, confused and very frightened. You are in a dark, lonely place. How did you get there, how will you ever get out??

by Denise Talbot, Family Services Coordinator

Every 72 seconds someone develops Alzheimer’s disease. This startling statistic is expected to increase to every 33 seconds by 2050. Alzheimer’s does not discriminate based on age, culture, gender or economic status.

The Alzheimer’s Association, Connecticut Chapter, based in Kensington, with regional offices in Hamden, Norwalk, Norwich and Waterbury, offers a broad range of programs and services for people with the disease, families, caregivers and professional care providers.

The Association depends greatly upon the generosity of individual donations, bequests, community fundraisers and annual Memory Walks held statewide. In fiscal year 2007, 80% of donated dollars were used for education, awareness, programs, family services, public advocacy, and research.

Education and services for families are provided at no cost. The 24/7 multilingual Helpline provides emotional support and is a vital resource for information, assistance, care consultation and referrals. Respite Care Programs, available through the Alzheimer’s Association and the State of Connecticut, provide a reprieve from the constant physical and emotional stress caregivers experience and, more than 98 caregiver Support Groups are regularly scheduled statewide.

Family Training Seminars educate caregivers and families on such topics as communication and behavioral interventions, maintaining a safe environment, family dynamics, caregiver stress, and legal and financial issues.

The Safe Return© program helps reunite loved ones with the person with dementia who has wandered. The administrative cost to families for this program is minimal. The Association also offers dementia care training through The Dementia Training Institute to healthcare professionals in an effort to improve the quality of care for individuals with dementia.

For additional information regarding either the programs, services, Respite Care, please call 800-356-5502 or visit www.alz.org/ct.

Angels for Alzheimer’s Cure is a grass roots group of Stamfordites, who have experienced this horrific illness first hand. Our goal is to fire up awareness, commitment and support to find a cure for one of the most devastating, heartbreaks currently without a happy ending! There is no poster child to help promote a success story, there is no remission, there are no happy memories, in fact, there ARE NO MEMORIES at all.

But...

What there ARE, are unbelievable family members enduring the on-going heartaches and long good byes.
What there ARE, are geriatric professionals trying to find better ways to help each afflicted person live out their life in dignity and to help the family cope.
What there ARE, are unyielding researchers who are the beacons of light on this journey of hope.
What there ARE, are dedicated volunteers, and overworked, underpaid compassionate health care workers in nursing facilities.
What can YOU do to stop this epidemic?

- As a corporation, private business, professional, private citizen, organization or neighborhood—partner with us as a sponsor for researchers to find the reason and create a cure!
- Become an advocate, help raise funds - to improve awareness to those who need direction, education, and support.
- Alert legislators to the financial support needed to supplement the disappointing government funding for Alzheimer’s research as compared to the funding given other catastrophic illnesses. Alzheimer’s has rapidly moved up to the 7th cause for death!

An interview with Yale researcher Dr. Christopher van Dyck, MD, recent recipient of the Alzheimer’s Association CT Chapter “Compassion and Cure” award.

**Dr. van Dyck’s opening remarks:**
These are cautiously hopeful times for Alzheimer’s disease research. Although the cause of Alzheimer’s remains uncertain, the leading hypothesis holds that it is the accumulation of “amyloid plaques” in the brain that gradually poisons surrounding brain cells, leading to dementia—a loss of memory and other intellectual abilities serious enough to impair daily functioning. Currently, a number of experimental treatments are being tested to see if they can slow or even reverse the development of amyloid plaques in Alzheimer’s disease. These include drugs that aim to inhibit plaque formation, as well as immunologic treatments—vaccines and monoclonal antibodies designed to clear the beta-amyloid protein from the body. If any of these treatments prove beneficial for patients with Alzheimer’s, we may even envision a time when we can treat people at a pre-symptomatic stage.

**QUESTION: Chris, please share information in reference to the new study at Yale “Amyloid imaging in subjects at risk for Alzheimer’s disease.” (The project is directed by Anna Bruck, MD, PhD, and the principal investigator is Christopher H. van Dyck, MD.)**

Dr. van Dyck: An important question is whether amyloid plaques can be measured in the brains of people who have no symptoms but are at increased risk. This is what is being investigated in a new study at Yale funded by the Alzheimer’s Association entitled “Amyloid imaging in subjects at risk for Alzheimer’s disease.” The project is directed by Anna Bruck, MD, PhD, and the principal investigator is Christopher H. van Dyck, MD. The purpose of this research is to examine whether beta-amyloid plaques, as measured using Positron Emission Tomography (PET), are increased in healthy individuals with a family history of Alzheimer’s disease who also carry the genetic risk factor ApoE4.

**QUESTION: Chris, how can one learn more about this research study and what is involved?**

Dr. van Dyck: The Yale Alzheimer’s Disease Research Unit is currently enrolling individuals who have no memory problems, are between the ages of 50 and 70, and have at least one first degree relative (brother, sister, mother, or father) with probable Alzheimer’s disease. The study procedures include a medical history questionnaire, blood and urine samples, neuropsychological tests, an MRI scan and a PET scan. Individuals interested in participating in the Yale study should call Anna Bruck, MD, PhD, at (203) 764-8100 or e-mail: anna.bruck@yale.edu.

In closing, Dr. van Dyck, “These scans are still experimental, and we can’t predict who will get Alzheimer’s or give feedback about what they show. However, this is very important research for understanding the development of Alzheimer’s. The Alzheimer’s Association grant is for $240,000 over a 3 year period, which is typical for a study like this.”

JOIN US IN THE FIGHT NOW!
Call Angel Dazzo, Chairperson at 321-2028.
Or e-mail angel.dazzo@angelsforalz.com to combine our efforts, or call 800 356-5502 to talk with an Alz. Assoc. representative, or visit www.alz.org/ct, to have your concerns or questions addressed. Any donations should be made out to, Alz. Assoc.Ct. Chapter, mailed to Angels of Alz. Cure, c/o Mrs. Sandy DeLeo, 77 Oakdale Rd. Stamford, CT. 06906.