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# Alzheimer's: The Invisible Second Victim

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## Introduction:

- Alzheimer's Disease or (AD) is a progressive illness that destroys memories of those affected.
- Family members are the most common home caregivers for Alzheimer's patients.
- Family members must manage the treatment of the patient while also managing their own emotions towards the diagnosis of a loved one with AD.

### Sources:

Mittelman, Mary S. "Family Caregiving for People with Alzheimer's Disease: Results of the NYU Spouse Caregiver Intervention Study." *Generations: Journal of the American Society on Aging* 26, no. 1 (2002): 104-6.

O'Reilly, James, and Rhonna Shatz. "Dementia and Financial Issues." In *Dementia and Alzheimer's: Solving the Practical and Policy Challenges*, 49-56 Anthem Press, 2019.

Chesla, Catherine, Ida Martinson, and Marilou Muwaswes. "Continuities and Discontinuities in Family Members' Relationships with Alzheimer's Patients." *Family Relations* 43, no. 1 (1994): 3-9.



Normal Brain



Advanced Alzheimer's

Alzheimer's causes severe brain atrophy which causes the patient to lose their memories of their loved ones.



Alzheimer's Disease effects many family dynamics.

## Research Findings:

- Providing Long-term care can lead to physical ailments.
- Decisions made by the family can be emotionally draining
- Strong caregiver-patient relationships often have strong levels of mutuality and reciprocity.
- The average annual cost of a nursing home stay was \$92,738 and the total average cost of dementia was found to be \$287,038
- AD currently affects over five million American families.
- Over 11 million Americans provide unpaid care for those with AD.
- These caregivers provided over 16 billion hours of unpaid care.

## Conclusion

- The effects of AD on family members is often overlooked and ignored by the research of the disease itself.
- There is still no cure for Alzheimer's
- The progressive nature of Alzheimer's means that it can last anywhere from three to twenty years, meaning the caregiver may have to provide care for up to twenty years.
- Family is often at risk of social isolation
- Counseling can help families provide higher quality care for a longer time.



Many caregivers are the spouse of the patient with AD.