CDC
SAFER · HEALTHIER · PEOPLE™

National Center for
Health Statistics
...Monitoring
the Nation's
Health

NCHS Data on Alzheimer's Disease

About NCHS

The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions.

Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides multiple perspectives to help us understand the population's health, influences on health, and health outcomes.

Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's Disease is a specific type of dementia. Symptoms include progressive memory loss, disorientation and behavioral changes, such as wandering, eventually leading to an inability to care for oneself. Alzheimer's can be truly distinguished from other types of dementia only after death, based on changes in the brain observed at autopsy.* Because of this difficulty with diagnosis, health care utilization data are provided for both Alzheimer's disease and other dementias in general. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are becoming more prevalent as the population ages. Dementia prevalence increases sharply with age, and the 85+ population is the fastest growing segment of the 65+ population. Dementia is a strong risk factor for institutionalization as progressive inability for self-care becomes more than caregivers can handle outside an institutional setting.

Key Findings

Prevalence

- The prevalence of Alzheimer's disease in the general population increases sharply with age, doubling approximately every five years after age 65: estimates range from over 1 percent in persons aged 65–69 to approximately 20 percent among persons over 85 years old.

Mortality

- In 2000, 49,600 deaths were attributed to Alzheimer's disease. Of these, 49,000 occurred in persons 65 years of age and older, a rate of 140.0 per 100,000 persons.

- In 2000, Alzheimer's disease was the 7th leading cause of death among persons over 65 years of age.

Health care utilization

- In 1999 and 2000, an annual average of 385,000 hospital discharges per year included the diagnosis of Alzheimer's and dementia, generally as a comorbid condition. The annual average number of discharges for patients over 85 years of age was 996,000, or 17 percent of discharges.
- In 1999, 214,000 nursing home admissions among persons aged 65 years and older specifically mentioned a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. A total of 574,000 nursing home admissions had mention of Alzheimer's or dementia, which was approximately 40 percent of all admissions.

Alzheimer's Disease Data Sources

NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. They include:

- **National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey** – collects information about the health and diet of people in the United States. NHANES is unique in that it combines a home interview with health tests that are done in a Mobile Examination Center. The data collected include questions measuring cognitive functioning. **http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhanes.htm**

- **National Vital Statistics System** – collects mortality information from death certificates in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, including characteristics of the decedent and underlying and contributing causes of death including Alzheimer's disease. **http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss.htm**

- **National Hospital Discharge Survey** - is a national probability survey designed to meet the need for information on characteristics of inpatients discharged from non-Federal short-stay hospitals in the United States.   Th**e data include the number of discharges per year for persons with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/hdasd/nhds.htm**

- **National Nursing Home Survey** – is a continuing series of national sample surveys of nursing homes, their residents, and their staff. All nursing homes included in this survey had at least three beds and were either certified by Medicare or Medicaid, or had a state license. This survey provides information from both the provider and the recipient's perspective. Data about the facility include: size, ownership, Medicare/Medicaid certification, occupancy rate, and expenses. Data are obtained on demographic characteristics, health status, services received, and the number of residents discharged among persons 65 years of age and older with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. **http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/nnhsd/nnhsd.htm**

*Alzheimer's disease and dementia as a whole are generally under-diagnosed, particularly at the community level, but also in health care settings. Using health care encounter records rather than direct examination to estimate rates can lead to an underestimation of prevalence and impact.