

Mission & Activities of Alzheimer's Disease International: Towards the Global Plan on Dementia

By Marc Wortmann



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Dementia is the collective name for progressive brain syndromes which affect memory, thinking, behavior and emotion, including symptoms such as loss of memory, confusion, or difficulty performing routine tasks. The most well-known form of dementia is Alzheimer's disease but others include vascular dementia and fronto-temporal dementia. Every person will experience dementia in their own way, but eventually those affected are unable to care for themselves and need help with all aspects of daily life.

What Is ADI?

Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) is the federation of over 80 Alzheimer associations around the world, including Alzheimer's Association Japan. ADI's vision is prevention, care and inclusion today, and cure tomorrow. Our mission is to strengthen and support Alzheimer associations to raise awareness about dementia, to empower people with dementia and their care partners, and to increase investment in dementia care and research. Through official consultative status with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and our work with governments in many countries, we aim to make dementia a global health priority.

Globally, almost 50 million people are estimated to be living with dementia in 2017, and this number will almost treble by 2050. In 2018, the global cost of dementia will be over \$1 trillion. The cost is already much greater than the market values of the world's most valuable companies; including more than three times that of Toyota.

The ADI conference is the greatest opportunity each year to share the achievements of the global community of those working towards the improved quality of life, treatment and understanding for people living with dementia and their care partners everywhere. It is regularly attended by over 1,000 people from all areas of science, care and other interests in dementia and is the longest-running international conference on this topic. The conference contains

presentations on the latest science and news in the dementia field. It also includes sessions on understanding and support for those who are not healthcare professionals, or who may be caring for a person with dementia or learning about the disease.

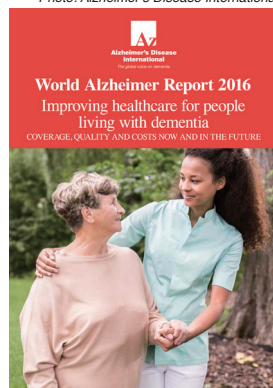
The conference is also a time to unite in looking to the future, by urging action by governments and policy makers that will have a long-term impact. Training for care partners and capacity building to tackle dementia are two examples of important policies.

The title of our conference in Kyoto in 2017 — "Together Towards a New Era" — was significant as, after many years, dementia is now becoming widely recognized as one of the worst health and social crises of our time. ADI has advocated for many years for the adoption of a global plan to address the worldwide impact of dementia. In 2017, a plan is being developed to make this a reality.

WHO Global Plan Promoting Action on Dementia by 2017

The global plan being developed by the WHO recognizes the impact of dementia and commits to progress in seven areas including dementia awareness, risk reduction, diagnosis, care and treatment, support for care partners, and research. As I write, it is approaching discussion at the World Health Assembly, the meeting of all WHO member states, where it is hoped it will be adopted and then put into

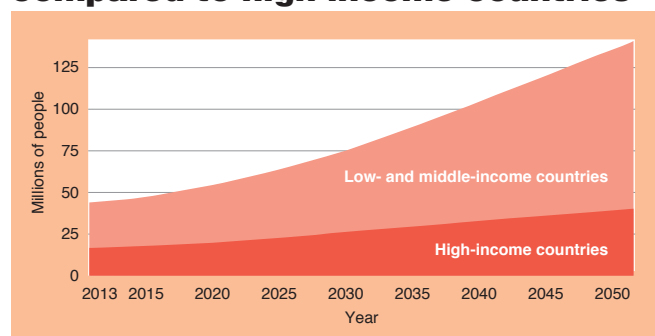
Photo: Alzheimer's Disease International



The World Alzheimer Report 2016 contains important recommendations for strengthening dementia healthcare systems, including considerations of quality and cost of care for transforming health services within national plans on dementia.

CHART

Numbers of people with dementia in low- & middle-income countries compared to high-income countries



Source: Alzheimer's Disease International

action. The global plan contains targets for each area that WHO member states should meet by 2025.

One of these targets is for 75% of countries to provide support and training activities for carers and families of those affected by dementia. Another is that every member state should develop a public awareness campaign on dementia. There was an agreement at the ADI conference that we must act now to ensure that the best possible outcome is achieved in meeting all seven targets of the plan.

Our 2017 conference, hosted by Alzheimer's Association Japan and attended by participants from more than 70 countries, represented an important meeting of global experts and those affected by dementia ahead of this month's historic opportunity to adopt the global plan at the World Health Assembly.

The first plenary session, "Global Aspects of Dementia", was followed by a look at the achievements and lessons learned from the dementia movement from the 1980s to the present day, and this was supported by a focus on all three days of the conference on dementia-friendly communities and examples from around the world.

People living with dementia and their care partners were actively involved as speakers and in workshops, including a focus on the benefits and need for those affected and other individuals to support clinical research.

Our partners, associations and sponsors were actively involved in supporting the message throughout the conference that every government has a critical responsibility to prepare for the WHO global plan. It is important that governments do this by developing national plans of their own to tackle the unique experience of dementia in their country.

This message formed the core of ADI's response to a "zero" draft version of the global plan in 2016, recognizing it as a significant step forward in providing support for the majority of people living with dementia who receive little or no support, most of whom live in low- and middle-income countries. We called for improvement in targets for dementia awareness and the inclusion of palliative care, as well as specific targets for risk reduction of dementia.

In January 2017, all 34 members of the WHO Executive Board supported the first draft of the document, which had been strengthened in response to the consultation.

This May, I am pleased to be invited to attend the 70th World Health Assembly, where the plan is likely to be endorsed by all member states of the WHO. Special recognition is needed for the governments of Switzerland and the Dominican Republic who have been particularly active in their support for the plan.

The targets of the global plan are ambitious, but it is essential that governments put policies in place now which include appropriate funding and clear implementation plans so that they make a difference further into the future. The goal to meet the targets of the plan by 2025 is not much time, but has huge potential to set a precedent for a new era.

Alzheimer associations and people living with dementia will continue to be a part of this process, and everyone can support greater awareness of dementia by getting involved in our conference, and by joining World Alzheimer's Month activities every September.

Whether it is talking about dementia or learning about clinical research, everyone can play a role in ensuring the global plan is implemented.

The next International Conference of Alzheimer's Disease International will be held on July 25-29, 2018.

Photo: Alzheimer's Disease International



There are almost 10 million new cases of dementia every year. The number of people living with dementia in Asia is expected to increase by up to 70% by 2030.

Photo: Alzheimer's Disease International



The number of people living with dementia is expected to almost triple by 2050 if effective risk reduction and prevention strategies are not put in place.

Photo: Alzheimer's Disease International



The stigmatization and misinformation that surrounds dementia remains a global problem that requires global action.

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Marc Wortmann has been executive director of ADI since 2006. He is in charge of all aspects of ADI's work, including collaborating with the Board, implementing finance and campaign strategies, representing ADI at international conferences and in the NCD Alliance, and taking part in WHO and UN meetings.