



NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2008

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Editorial

April has been a month of encouragement and of hope; with support for all those affected by dementia becoming ever-more evident.

Alzheimer Europe has seen an unprecedented rate of MEPs pledging their commitment to our campaign to make



dementia a European priority. We look forward to working with these new allies.

Also, this month has seen the Scottish government announce their three-year health plan which commits £630,000 to addressing the needs surrounding dementia. This follows in the footsteps of France, England, Norway, Ireland and Germany in their pledges to fight dementia, clearly signalling that governments are taking this issue seriously.

The preparations for the first European Presidency Conference on Alzheimer's disease are also progressing well with a date now fixed for 30 and 31 October. We hope that the French Presidency will provide a new impetus to the European collaboration on Alzheimer's disease.

Responding to the interest of MEPs for more information about dementia, Alzheimer Europe organised its third lunch debate in the

European Parliament which was hosted by Françoise Grossetête. MEPs and representatives from the pharmaceutical industry and national Alzheimer organisations heard Professor Lutz Frölich explain which measures influence the onset of dementia. Already there have been calls for another debate, which we are in the process of organising for September.

The Board of Alzheimer Europe also met in April and was able to look back on a successful 2007. At the same time, the Board had a critical look at the Commission proposal on information to patients and questioned the possibility for the pharmaceutical industry to provide information on their medicines in the media.

In this newsletter, we also include an in-depth article of the work of the UK Alzheimer's Society and its parliamentary inquiry into the overprescribing of antipsychotic drugs to people with Alzheimer's disease.

Finally, we look forward to seeing many of you at the 18th Alzheimer Europe "Breaking Barriers" conference in Oslo at the end of May where, together, we can strengthen our understanding of how best to tackle dementia and support all those who are effected by this devastating disease.

Jean Georges
Executive Director

Making dementia a European priority

Our campaign enjoys increasing support from MEPs with the following pledging their support in April 2008:



Frieda Brepoels
Belgium, EPP-ED



Maria da Assunção Esteves
Portugal, EPP-ED



Edite Estrela
Portugal, PES



João de Deus Pinheiro
Portugal, EPP-ED



Luis Queiró
Portugal, EPP-ED



José Ribeiro
Portugal, EPP-ED



Eoin Ryan
Ireland, UEN



Jean Spautz
Luxembourg, EPP-ED



Iuliu Winkler
Romania, EPP-ED

With their support, the number of Members of the European Parliament who have pledged their support to Alzheimer Europe by either signing the Paris Declaration or joining the European Alzheimer's Alliance has been increased to 67. Alzheimer Europe can now count on the support of Members of the European Parliament from all seven political groups and from 20 of the 27 Member States of the European Union:

Austria

1. Ettl Harald (PES)

Belgium

2. Brepoels Frieda (EPP-ED)
3. Busquin Philippe (PES)
4. Hutchinson Alain (PES)
5. Langendries Raymond (EPP-ED)
6. Sterckx Dirk (ALDE)

Czech Republic

7. Cabrnock Milan (EPP-ED)
8. Kohlíček Jaromír (GUE/NGL)
9. Roithová Zuzana (EPP-ED)
10. Vlasák Oldřich (EPP-ED)

Finland

11. Myller Riitta (PES)
12. Virrankoski Kyösti (ALDE)

France

13. Bourzai Bernadette (France, PES)
14. Daul Joseph (EPP-ED)
15. De Veyrac Christine (EPP-ED)
16. Fouré Brigitte (EPP-ED)
17. Griesbeck Nathalie (ALDE)
18. Grossetête Françoise (EPP-ED)
19. Henin Jacky (GUE/NGL)
20. Lamassoure Alain (EPP-ED)
21. Morin Elisabeth (EPP-ED)
22. Onesta Gérard (Greens-EFA)

23. Toubon Jacques (EPP-ED)

Germany

- 24. Niebler Angelika (EPP-ED)
- 25. Ulmer Thomas (EPP-ED)
- 26. Weisgerber Anja (EPP-ED)

Greece

- 27. Koppa Maria Eleni (PES)
- 28. Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou Rodi (EPP-ED)
- 29. Matsouka Maria (PES)
- 30. Panayotopoulos Marie (EPP-ED)
- 31. Papadimoulis Dimitrios (GUE/NGL)
- 32. Schinas Margaritis (EPP-ED)
- 33. Vakalis Nikolaos (EPP-ED)

Hungary

- 34. Levai Katalin (PES)
- 35. Surján László (EPP-ED)

Ireland

- 36. Crowley Brian (UEN)
- 37. McDonald Mary Lou (GUE/NGL)
- 38. McGuinness Mairead (EPP-ED)
- 39. Mitchell Gay (EPP-ED)
- 40. Ryan Eoin (UEN)
- 41. Sinnott Kathy (IND/DEM)

Italy

- 42. Battilocchio Alessandro (NI)
- 43. Podestá Guido (EPP-ED)

Lithuania

- 44. Dickute Jolanta (ALDE)

Luxembourg

- 45. Lulling Astrid (EPP-ED)
- 46. Spautz Jean (EPP-ED)

Malta

- 47. Muscat Joseph (PES)

Netherlands

- 48. Corbey Dorette (PES)
- 49. Wortmann Corien (Netherlands)

Poland

- 50. Masiel Jan Tadeusz (Poland, UEN)
- 51. Rogalski Boguslaw (Poland, UEN)

Portugal

- 52. Coelho Carlos (EPP-ED)
- 53. Esteves Maria do Assunção (EPP-ED)
- 54. Estrela Edite (PES)
- 55. Figueiredo Ilda (GUE/NGL)
- 56. Pinheiro João de Deus (EPP-ED)
- 57. Queiró Luis (EPP-ED)
- 58. Ribeiro José (EPP-ED)

Romania

- 59. Winkler Iuliu (EPP-ED)

Slovakia

- 60. Mikolasik Miroslav (EPP-ED)

Sweden

- 61. Cederschiold Charlotte (EPP-ED)

United Kingdom

- 62. Bowls John (EPP-ED)
- 63. Hall Fiona (ALDE)
- 64. McAvan Linda (PES)
- 65. Moraes Claude (PES)
- 66. Stihler Catherine (PES)
- 67. Willmott Glenis (PES)

Similarly, our campaign continues to gather support from individuals and at the end of April 2008, 3019 individuals had signed our call to make dementia a European priority.

Alzheimer Europe also gratefully reports on the activities of the following Member of the European Alzheimer's Alliance.

1 April 2008: Françoise Grossetête questions Commissioner designate on priorities in the Alzheimer's field

Members of the European Parliament held a question and answer session with prospective health Commissioner Androula Vassiliou on 1 April 2008 to assess her suitability and qualifications to take up the post of Health Commissioner after Markos Kyprianou's resignation.



Asked by Françoise Grossetête, MEP and Chairperson of the European Alzheimer's Alliance about what she intended to do in the field of Alzheimer's disease, the third cause of mortality in the world, she answered that she gives "primary importance to mental health", since "if we do not take action now, we will face many problems in the future".

Alzheimer Europe news

1 April 2008: Alzheimer Europe organises lunch debate on prevention at the European Parliament



Professor Lutz Frölich presented “Risk and protective factors in Alzheimer’s Disease and Dementia – Can the epidemic be prevented?” at Alzheimer Europe’s third lunch debate. It was hosted by Françoise Grossetête, the Chair of the European Alzheimer’s

Alliance at the European Parliament and attended by Members of the European Parliament, representatives of pharmaceutical companies and Alzheimer organisations.

Dr Frölich highlighted the known risk factors for dementia to be:

- Age
- Genetic factors – ApoE
- High blood pressure at midlife
- High cholesterol at midlife
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Smoking

And the known protective factors against dementia to be:

- Physical activity
- Cognitive/psychosocial activity
- Mediterranean diet
- Moderate alcohol intake



1 April 2008: Alzheimer Europe Board looks back on a successful 2007

At its meeting of 1 April, the Board of Alzheimer Europe adopted the 2007 Annual Report which highlights a number of the key achievements of the organisation. Maurice O’Connell, Alzheimer Europe’s chairperson, underlined the great progress achieved by the organisation in some key areas: “We were really able to act on the Paris Declaration and our campaign to make dementia a European priority received some important backing from Members of the European Parliament. This is a very positive development and bodes well for our future activities”.

The Board adopted the financial accounts which showed a slight operating surplus of over EUR 16,000. The Board also:

- welcomed Julie Fraser as the new Communications Officer of the organisation,
- had an update on the progress of the expert group on end-of-life care for people with dementia,
- discussed the results of the Commission financed “EuroCoDe – European Collaboration on Dementia” project,
- created a working group to make recommendations on how to better involve people with dementia,
- adopted a draft charter of rights to be submitted to the Annual General Meeting of the organisation,
- adopted a response to the European Commission consultation on information to patients,
- discussed the preparations of the Annual Conferences of Alzheimer Europe in 2008 in Oslo and 2009 in Brussels,
- approved the work plan and budget for 2009 to be submitted for adoption at the Annual General Meeting.

1 April 2008: Alzheimer Europe adopts a position which calls into question the Commission proposal on information to patients

In its response to the Commission consultation on its legal proposal on information to patients, Alzheimer Europe questioned a number of key recommendations.

In particular, the organisation did not support the Commission proposal to allow pharmaceutical companies to provide information on their medicines in the media, such as radio, TV and print media. Rather,

Alzheimer Europe expressed its support for a clear distinction between information “pull” and “push” mechanisms and called on the European Commission to continue with the ban on the latter and to define modalities for patients actively seeking information on medicinal products to be able to access such information.

8 April 2008: Jean Georges stands down as EPF Board member

At the General Assembly of the European Patients’ Forum (EPF), Jean Georges, the Executive Director of Alzheimer Europe stepped down from the EPF Board. Anders Olauson, EPF Chair thanked him for his commitment to the European patient cause and his contributions to the EPF Board over the past years.

14 April 2008: France proceeds with plans for EU Conference on Alzheimer’s

The steering committee for the EU Conference on Alzheimer’s disease under the French

Presidency met for the second time. Chaired by Ms Florence Lustman, the coordinator of the French Alzheimer’s Plan, the meeting approved the key themes for the conference:

1. the Research efforts undertaken on a national and European level,
2. an exchange of views and best practices in the care and support of people with dementia and their carers,
3. an overview and comparison of the professions involved in the treatment and care of people with dementia.

The steering committee also decided that ethical and legal aspects should feature prominently in the discussions and exchanges.

Françoise Grossetête, chair of the European Alzheimer’s Alliance and Jean Georges, Executive Director of Alzheimer Europe participated in the meeting.

AE Networking

The following meetings were attended by representatives of Alzheimer Europe:

Date	Meeting	AE Representative
1 April	Alzheimer Europe Board in Brussels, Belgium	
1 April	European Parliament Lunch-debate: “Is Alzheimer’s disease preventable?” in Brussels, Belgium	
1 April	Meeting with Eion Ryan, MEP for Ireland, regarding the Paris Declaration and European Alzheimer’s Alliance	Dumas Annette
3 April	Meeting with Roche in Brussels, Belgium	Georges Jean & Dumas Annette
3 April	Meeting with Parliament Magazine in Brussels, Belgium	Georges Jean & Dumas Annette
4-5 April	Lundbeck Symposium in Budapest, Hungary	Georges Jean
7 April	French Senate Hearing on Alzheimer’s disease in Paris, France	Georges Jean & Dumas Annette
8 April	General Assembly of European Patients’ Forum in Brussels, Belgium	Georges Jean & Dumas Annette
8 April	Preparatory meeting for 19 th Alzheimer Europe conference in Brussels, Belgium	Georges Jean
8-9 April	Spring conference of European Patients’ Forum in Brussels, Belgium	Dumas Annette
14 April	Steering committee for French Presidency Conference on Alzheimer’s disease in Paris, France	Georges Jean
15 April	Carers Intergroup in European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium	Dumas Annette
16 April	NGO Health Grouping meeting at the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France	Gover Dianne

European developments

8 April 2008: European Commission launches consultation on advanced therapies

Regulation (EC) No 1394/2007 on advanced therapy medicinal products lays down specific rules concerning the authorisation, supervision and pharmacovigilance of advanced therapy medicinal products (gene therapy, somatic cell therapy and tissue engineering). This Regulation will apply from 30 December 2008.

The European Commission published on 13 December 2007 an implementation plan, outlining its priorities for the implementation of the Regulation. The implementation plan has been developed and agreed with the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

As part of this plan, the Commission intends to revise Part IV, Annex I to Directive 2001/83/EC in order to adapt it to the specificities of advanced therapy medicinal products. This public consultation document presents preliminary proposals to replace the existing Part IV of this Annex I.

Contributions should be sent by e-mail to nicolas.rossignol@ec.europa.eu, before 10 June 2008.

9 April 2008: MEPs approve new Cypriot Commissioner for Health, Androula Vassiliou



The new Public Health, Food Safety, Animal Health and Welfare Commissioner, Androula Vassiliou, has replaced Markos Kyprainou, who left to become the Cypriot's foreign minister.

Ms Vassiliou, who said, "Health is wealth and I am determined to work hard towards ensuring high standards for our citizens, be they in Romania, Sweden, the UK or Cyprus" will be in office at least until the appointment of a new Commission after the June 2009 European Parliamentary elections.

9 April 2008: European Patients' Forum calls for strong commitment on health literacy

Opening the European Patient's Forum (EPF) Annual Spring Conference, entitled "health literacy provides hope!" the new Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou said, "The patient-centred vision of healthcare today calls for greater empowerment of patients. This is an essential step if we are to achieve improved quality of care and health outcomes leading to a better quality of life.

The Conference brought together representatives from EU patient organisations, health professionals, health advocacy organisations, industry and policy makers. All recognised the need to increase the health literacy skills of patients, citizens and health professionals, calling for the European institutions and EU Member States' governments to take measures to institutionalise patients' empowerment, support and implement health literacy policies and programmes and also to set up a European Health Literacy Network.

Annette Dumas represented Alzheimer Europe at the conference.

We provide full references to articles on our website
www.alzheimer-europe.org

30 April 2008: Innovative Medicines Initiative calls for research proposals

The Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) aims to make Europe the world leader in pharmaceutical research by removing research bottlenecks in the current drug development process.

Research proposals are called for in 18 areas, including proposals for neurodegenerative disorders which:

- improve the predictive value of animal models,
- identify pharmacodynamic markers of drug response and
- develop pharmacodynamic models that allow early prediction of efficacy and markers to aid stratification of the patient population.

The IMI is a public-private partnership (PPP) initiative between the European Commission and the pharmaceutical industry.

For further information please see: www.imi.europa.eu/index_en.html

Policy Watch

21 April 2008: Scottish Government announces three-year plan to help people with dementia and their carers



Shona Robinson, the Scottish Public Health Minister, announced the Scottish Executive's new health support package, which will see more than £630,000 invested in dementia over a three-

year period.

Speaking at a leadership conference of mental health professionals in Glasgow, the Minister explained that Alzheimer Scotland and the Dementia Services Development Centre have been asked by the Government to collaborate and propose practical solutions for support.

Shona Robinson also announced that the Scottish Government is currently preparing a public awareness and information campaign.

The three-year plan has been warmly welcomed by Alzheimer Scotland.

28 April 2008: Review endorses the policy of free personal care for older people in Scotland



Commissioned by the Scottish Government, Lord Sutherland's independent funding review of Free Personal and Nursing

Care (FPNC) looked at:

- The total resources available to implement the policy
- The distribution of the total resources amongst local authorities
- The impact of the withdrawal of Attendance Allowance to pensioners in receipt of FPNC on the financial balance between the Scottish and UK Governments and
- The long-term sustainability of the policy

Lord Sutherland concluded that the UK Government was wrong to remove the Attendance Allowance resources from the Scottish budget. Jim Jackson, Chief Executive of Alzheimer Scotland, was delighted that the review "confirmed the Scottish Government's intention that free personal care is an

entitlement for all older people on the basis of need, not at the Council's discretion".

The Scottish government will now consider the report in detail with the Convention of local Scottish authorities (COLSA).

28 April 2008: British MPs highlight need to stop over-prescription of anti-psychotic drugs to people with dementia



In the report "A last resort", the All Party Parliamentary Group on Dementia (APPG) urges the British

Government to stop the over-prescribing of anti-psychotic drugs to people with dementia. According to Jeremy Wright, the Chair of the APPG, the report shines a light on one of the darkest areas of dementia care and recommends a five-point plan to address the issue for inclusion in the government's National Dementia Strategy which should be published later this year.

Members News

12 March 2008: Alzheimer Scotland announces a new initiative, "Care for a curry"



"Care for a Curry" is a new initiative which will be launched by Alzheimer Scotland on 15 May 2008. The initiative aims to raise money and awareness about dementia. The March edition of the Dementia in Scotland's newsletter lists the main ways to promote Care for a Curry as:

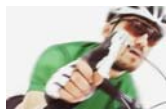
- Encouraging people to have their own curry parties at home –either buying in curries from a supermarket and asking for a donation from friends, or cooking their favourite curry dishes
- Arranging a curry night at a restaurant and agreeing ahead with friends that they will give a donation to Alzheimer Scotland
- Approaching organisations to see if they would host curry funding events (for example in work or school canteens or in a pub for a themed quiz night)



A Care for a curry information pack is available which includes guidance on running an event,

posters, recipes, invitations, donation envelopes and balloons.

1 April 2008: Spinning marathon is organised in Germany to raise awareness of dementia prevention



The German Alzheimer Association in Schleswig-Holstein has organised many activities around their “Forget-me-not” project, of which preventing Alzheimer’s disease through sport is an important part. The Association organised a spinning marathon which saw over 80 people take part. Under the supervision of trainers from all over Germany, participants sweated for a good cause and had fun doing some sport. Part of the proceeds went to the Alzheimer Association in Schleswig-Holstein. After almost six hours of spinning, even Ralf Labinsky, chairperson of the Alzheimer Association in Schleswig-Holstein, was visibly worn out but in good spirits.

The spinning marathon was one of over 30 activities which were organised in the framework of the “Forget-me-not – living everyday with Alzheimer’s” event of the Alzheimer Association in Schleswig-Holstein which over the last 2 years has made efforts to shed light on the taboo theme of dementia. Other projects have included a nation-wide touring play “Rosa ist reif”, a school project on the topic of dementia, several Nordic walking events, a cooking show and a photo competition.



“In Schleswig-Holstein, “forget-me-not” has become a catchword for information and explanation about dementia,” said the Schleswig-Holstein State Minister, Dr Gitta Trauernicht,

8 April 2008: German Alzheimer Association updates its brochure on long-term care insurance



Due to recent changes in legislation relating to the long-term care insurance in Germany, Deutsche Alzheimer Gesellschaft (the German Alzheimer Association) has updated its brochure on the long-term care insurance.

The 9th edition includes information on:

- the new allowance of up to EUR 200 per month for people with dementia with reduced capacity for daily living

- improvements in the provision of counselling and on a holiday allowance for carers
- where and how to apply for specific services
- entitlement to services
- the kind of services that exist
- getting a medical assessment
- applying for a medical certificate
- how to complain

The brochure is called “Leitfaden zur Pflegeversicherung. It is produced by the Deutsche Alzheimer Gesellschaft, has 184 pages, is the 9th edition and costs EUR 4.5.

10 April 2008: António Oliveira Costa joins Alzheimer Portugal as its first Executive Director



António Oliveira Costa has been employed by Alzheimer Portugal to act as its first Executive Director.

Before joining Alzheimer Portugal, António worked for 13 years as Institutional Director for a Portuguese NGO in the field of drugs addiction, and 5 years for the Council of Europe (North South Centre), as External Relations Responsible, based in Lisbon. In both cases, his portfolio included fund and awareness raising, media and public relations, and relations with Portuguese Government and local authorities. António has a degree in Political Science and is finishing his MA in Cultural and Political History.

23 April 2008: Hungarian Memory Foundation publishes leaflet on dementia

The Hungarian Memory Foundation (Memória Alapítvány) has published their leaflet entitled “Early Recognition of Dementia” which covers topics about dementia such as

- Memory loss
- Memory loss and dementia
- Symptoms
- Diagnosis
- Treatment
- Care
- Carers

The leaflet also explains how the Memory Foundation works. It will be left in medical

consulting rooms but can be obtained from the Foundation – see www.memoriaalapitvany.hu or contact the Foundation via e-mail at info@memoriaalapitvany.hu

April 2008: Norway prepares to receive over 500 participants at the 18th Alzheimer Conference



Looking forward to receiving over 500 participants at the 18th Alzheimer Conference entitled, “Breaking Barriers”, the Norwegian Alzheimer Society would like to remind people that it is still possible to register – please see www.alzheimer-conference2008.org.

The Society has also been busy in its role as one of the monitoring organizations of the Norwegian National plan for dementia, which was launched at the end of 2007.

We provide full references to articles on our website
www.alzheimer-europe.org

In Depth – Antipsychotics in dementia

The Alzheimer’s Society reports on the findings of the parliamentary inquiry into the prescribing of antipsychotic drugs.



A parliamentary inquiry undertaken by a group of influential MPs and Peers has concluded that people with dementia living in care homes should only be prescribed antipsychotic drugs ‘as a last resort’.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Dementia (APPG) highlighted that antipsychotics continue to be a first resort for dealing with challenging behaviour in people with dementia despite causing devastating side effects and increasing the risk of death. The group has described this practice as an acceptable abuse of human rights and has called on the Government, care home providers and health and social care professionals and regulators to work together to reduce prescriptions of these dangerous drugs.

Background

The APPG investigated the safety and appropriateness of prescribing antipsychotics to people with dementia after concerns raised by carers and dementia experts.

Evidence submitted to parliamentary inquiry reveals that between 100,000 and 150,000 people with dementia are being prescribed antipsychotic drugs in care homes. Antipsychotics are prescribed off licence to treat psychiatric or behavioural symptoms for dementia such as aggression, restlessness, and psychosis. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and Social Care Institute for Excellence (NICE-SCIE) have produced guidelines to encourage good practice for antipsychotic use (2007). The guidelines state that antipsychotic drugs should be used in the first instance only if an individual is severely distressed or if there is an immediate risk of harm to themselves or to others. If distress and/or agitation are less severe, non-drug interventions must be followed first such as psychotically therapy and care plans.

Risks

Dementia experts estimate that over 70% of prescriptions are inappropriate. The inquiry highlighted that NICE/SCIE guidance is regularly being ignored. People with dementia are regularly given the drugs well over the recommended 12 weeks (on average 1-2 years). People with dementia are also being prescribed the drugs in response to mild and moderate symptoms. This is very worrying when their side effects are taken into consideration. Antipsychotics can double risk of death and triple risk of stroke in people with dementia, heavily sedate individuals and accelerate cognitive decline.

Recommendations

The group concluded that there are effective alternatives and solutions to the use of antipsychotics. ‘Always a last resort’, sets out 5 workable solutions to reduce antipsychotic use in people with dementia. The APPG report’s overall recommendation urges the Government to incorporate these recommendations into the National Dementia Strategy which is being published in October.

1. Specialist dementia training for all care home staff
2. Families must be involved in decisions around the prescribing of these drugs
3. More pro-active support for care home staff from GPs, community psychiatric nurses and psychiatrists.

4. Compulsory medical reviews every 12 weeks of people with dementia on antipsychotics
5. A cost effectiveness review by NICE and a national audit by the Care Quality Commission

Findings welcomed by the dementia community

Alzheimer’s Society, which worked closely with parliamentarians to produce the report, has welcomed the Groups findings and recommendations. This has been echoed by Age Concern, Action on Elder Abuse and Commission of Social Care Inspection (CSC I). The report has also been welcomed by Care Services Minister Ivan Lewis MP.

Thanks to QRD

The Chair of the APPG on Dementia, Jeremy Wright MP, and the Alzheimer’s Society would like to thank all those members of QRD who submitted evidence to the inquiry. A copy of the report is available to download from the website www.alzheimers.org.uk/appg. If you would like to want to help the campaign please send a copy of this to your MP or your local PCT asking them to support the APPG’s 5 point action plan.

Science Watch

1 April 2008: Research finds no long term benefit of antipsychotic drugs for people with dementia



A British study published in the journal Public Library of Science Medicine indicates that anti-psychotic drugs administered to people with Alzheimer’s disease with mild behavioural disturbances have no long-term benefit for most patients. However, after six months treatment, patients showed a marked deterioration in their verbal fluency. Furthermore, a preliminary analysis of the results suggests that the use of neuroleptics may also increase death rates.

The study involved 165 people with advanced Alzheimer’s disease living in nursing homes in Great Britain with part of the group receiving a placebo, after an initial 3 month period when all received neuroleptic drugs. The drugs studied were thioridazine, chlorpromazine, haloperidol, trifluoperazine and risperidone.

2 April 2008: Animal research suggests that drinking coffee may protect the brain from damage

Researchers from the University of North Dakota (USA), led by Dr Jonathan Geiger, have found that coffee stabilises the “blood-brain barrier” which acts as filter against toxins and infections in the bloodstream, preventing them from damaging the central nervous system. It seems that the caffeine blocked some of the disruptive effects of cholesterol which would have made the blood brain barrier “leaky”.

The study was carried out on rabbits which were fed a fat-rich diet. After 12 weeks, those which had also been given a caffeine supplement (equivalent to one cup of coffee a day) had a far more intact blood-brain barrier. More research is now needed to see whether similar results can be found in humans.



7 April 2008: Two people die from vCJD in Spain

According to reports from the health department at the regional Castilla-Leon government, two people have died from variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) in central Spain. One died on 28 December 2007 and the other on 7 February 2008. They were aged 26 and 41 respectively.

7 April 2008: US company hopes to launch blood test to distinguish between AD and two other diseases

A blood test has been developed in the United States to distinguish between Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease and Lou Gehrig’s disease. The test, known as NuroPro, measures levels of 159 biomarkers in the blood. It has been tested by the company which produces it (Power3 Medical Products) on 180 people and success rates of 60-70% have been reported.



Commenting on behalf of the UK Alzheimer’s Society, Susan Sorensen, Head of Research, stated, “Opinion remains split on the potential effectiveness of a blood test, with some suggesting that Alzheimer’s is too complex to identify in this way.” Clinical trials are currently underway in the United States and Greece.

8 April 2008: US and Dutch studies suggest that depression may be a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease

Two separate studies carried out in the Netherlands and the United States suggest that people who have had depression may be at greater risk of developing Alzheimer's disease (AD). The first study was based on 486 people monitored over a 6 year period; the second involved 900 members of the Catholic clergy monitored for 13 years.

The Dutch study found that AD was 2.5 times more likely in people with a history of depression and 4 times more likely if depression occurred before the age of 60. However, Dr Monique Breteler, lead researcher of the Dutch study, stated, "We don't know yet whether depression contributes to the development of Alzheimer's disease, or whether another unknown factor causes both depression and dementia."

The US researchers found that people with more signs of depression at the start of the study were more likely to develop AD but that an increase in depressive symptoms in the early stages was mainly dependent on people having certain personality traits. The US researchers expressed their view that depression was a risk factor for AD, rather than a subtle early sign of its underlying pathology.

The Dutch and US studies are reported in *Neurology* and the *Archives of General Psychiatry* respectively.

9 April 2008: Insulin problems may increase the risk of Alzheimer's disease

According to a recent Swedish study, published in *Neurology*, men who had low insulin levels at the age of 50 were almost one and half times more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease in later life.

The study was carried out at Uppsala University (SE) and involved 2,300 men monitored over 32 years who had glucose testing when aged 50 to test for diabetes.

Dr Elina Ronnema, head of the study, explained, "Our results suggest a link between insulin problems and the origins of Alzheimer's disease and emphasise the importance of insulin in normal brain function. It's possible that insulin problems damage blood vessels in the brain, which leads to memory problems and Alzheimer's disease, but more research is needed to identify the exact mechanisms."

14 April 2008: Researchers call for clinical trials to assess the efficacy and safety of Etanercept

Prof. Edward Tobinick carried out a number of studies at a private clinic in California (USA) into the use of etanercept for people with Alzheimer's disease. About 50 people are being treated with this anti-arthritis drug. Positive results have been recorded such as an improvement in the ability to think and calculate, and with memory, verbal ability, mood, and gait (in those whose gait is affected). In some cases, results are reported to have occurred within minutes of the injection. A plateau is reached after about three months of treatment.

Experts remain divided about the study results, but feel that it would be worthwhile running a clinical trial. Funding has not yet been secured for such a trial.

17 April 2008: Having a larger hippocampus may protect against the symptoms of dementia

Results of a small-scale US study suggest that having a larger hippocampus (a part of the brain involved with memory) may offer some protection against the effects of Alzheimer's disease-related brain changes.

The brains of 35 people who had the plaques and tangles which are characteristic of Alzheimer's disease (AD) were analysed. 23 of these subjects had been diagnosed with AD before death, whereas 12 had not experienced cognitive problems prior to death. The hippocampus of the latter was on average 20% larger than that of the other 23 subjects.

This finding fits in with other research which highlights the possible influence of education and increased cognitive reserve in delaying some of the effects of dementia. However, due to the relatively small size of the study, further research is needed.

We provide full references to articles on our website

www.alzheimer-europe.org

29 April 2008: Human umbilical cord blood cells may alter AD related pathology in mice

According to the authors of a study reported in *Stem Cells and Development*, human umbilical cord blood cells (HUCBCs) have unique immunomodulatory potential. The researchers showed that when multiple low-dose infusions of HUCBC were given to genetically modified

mice, there was a marked reduction in the amount of amyloid plaques.

Dementia in Society

6 April 2008: Charlton Heston dies with Alzheimer's disease



Oscar-winning actor and political activist, Charlton Heston, died at his home in Beverly Hills on 6 April at the age of 84. In 2002 he announced he was in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. One of his last public appearances was at the White House in 2003 when he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Heston's screen breakthrough was in "The Greatest Show on Earth" and he went on to enjoy a career spanning over sixty years in films such as "The Ten Commandments", "Ben Hur" (for which he won an Oscar), "The Agony and the Ecstasy", "El Cid", "55 Days at Peking", "Touch of Evil", "The Planet of the Apes", "The Omega Man", "Earthquake" and "Airport". He also served as president of the Screen Actors Guild and was chairman of the American Film Institute.

The actor was also a political activist, having marched alongside Martin Luther King, he was later to become a strong supporter of the National Rifle Association (NRA) and was president of the NRA from 1998 until 2003 when he retired due to ill-health.

Charlton Heston will be remembered for his larger than life roles. He said of himself "I have played three presidents, three saints and two geniuses (...) If that doesn't create an ego problem, nothing does (...) I have lived such a wonderful life. I've lived enough for two people".

20 April 2008: Film-maker of documentary of person with Alzheimer's disease wins Bafta award



Paul Watson has received the British Academy of Film and Television Award's (Bafta's) Outstanding Contribution to Television award at the Bafta award ceremony in London. It was given in recognition of his 300

films which have spanned his 35 year career. John Willis, chairman of the Bafta television committee, said: "Paul Watson is one of the giants of documentary film-making. Over several decades he has created a string of memorable and often controversial documentaries, always striving for innovation in both form and content."

Paul's 2007, 90 minute documentary "Malcolm and Barbara: Love's Farewell" was the study of Malcolm's journey with Alzheimer's disease and its effect on those around him.

Speaking at the award's ceremony, Paul said, "I hope we will carry on putting ordinary people on the screen because they provide the information about what is going on in this country".

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Alzheimer Europe Board

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AE Calendar

The following meetings will be attended by representatives of Alzheimer Europe:

Date	Meeting	AE Representative
5 May	Meeting with German Health Ministry	Georges Jean
9 May	Meeting with GlaxoSmithKline in Luxembourg, Luxembourg	Georges Jean
13 May	Lunch debate in European Parliament on “Adherence to medicines” in Brussels, Belgium	Georges Jean
22 May	Alzheimer Europe Board in Oslo, Norway	
22 May	Alzheimer Europe Annual General Meeting in Oslo, Norway	
22-25 May	18 th Alzheimer Europe Conference “Breaking barriers” in Oslo, Norway	
28 May	EFPIA think tank in Brussels, Belgium	Dumas Annette
29 May	20 th anniversary meeting of Swiss Alzheimer’s association in Berne, Switzerland	Georges Jean



Future Conferences

Dates	Meeting	Place
6-8 May	Embracing the challenge: Citizenship and Dementia http://www.dementiacentreni.org/	Belfast, United Kingdom
21-23 May	VI Barcelona-Pittsburgh Biennial Conference “Dementia today” http://bcnpit.familialzheimer.org	Barcelona, Spain
29 May-1 June	36 th Congress of the European Association of Geriatric Psychiatry http://www.forumcongress.com/eagp/	Kos, Greece
12-16 July	6 th FENS Forum of European Neuroscience http://fens2008.neurosciences.asso.fr/	Geneva, Switzerland
26-31 July	11 th International Conference on Alzheimer’s disease and related disorders http://www.alz.org/icad/overview.asp	Chicago, USA
1-2 August	3 rd IANA Symposium on Alzheimer’s and nutrition http://www.serdi-fr.com/ABQ.htm	Albuquerque, USA
23-26 August	12 th Congress of the European Federation of Neurological Societies http://efns2008.efns.org/	Madrid, Spain
3-5 September	6 th International Conference on Frontotemporal Dementias www.ftd2008.org	Rotterdam, Netherlands
17-19 September	1 st Conference: Clinical Trials on Alzheimer’s disease http://www.ctad.fr/	Montpellier, France
9-11 October	5 th Congress for the German Alzheimer Association (Alzheimer Gesellschaft) www.ctw-congress.de/alzheimer	Erfurt, Germany