

# generation alzheimer's

the defining disease of the baby boomers



# Introduction

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This year, the first baby boomers turn 65 — when the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease significantly increases. While Alzheimer’s is not normal aging, age is the greatest risk factor for the disease.

This means baby boomers are its next target.

With the first wave of baby boomers reaching age 65, there is an impending wave of new cases and new families that will have to face the devastating, deteriorating, debilitating and heartbreaking disease known as Alzheimer’s — a progressive and fatal brain disorder that causes problems with memory, thinking and behavior.

Eventually, Alzheimer’s kills, but not before it takes everything away from you. It steals a person’s memories, judgment and independence. It robs spouses of lifetime companions and children of parents and grandparents. It destroys the security

of families and depletes millions of dollars annually from family and government budgets.

It is expected an estimated 10 million baby boomers will develop Alzheimer’s. Of those who reach the age of 85, nearly one in two will get it. And because there is no way to prevent, cure or even slow the progression of the disease, every one of these 10 million baby boomers will either die with Alzheimer’s or from it.

*Too many of America’s baby boomers will spend their retirement years either with Alzheimer’s or caring for someone who has it.*

And it’s not just the person with Alzheimer’s who suffers — it’s also the caregivers. Caring for someone with Alzheimer’s disease negatively affects the caregiver’s health, employment, income and financial security. But that is nothing compared to the human cost — the toll it takes watching a loved one slowly disappear.

Unless we find a treatment or a cure, Alzheimer’s will become **the defining disease** of the Baby Boom Generation. They will be Generation Alzheimer’s.

# Alzheimer's Is an Epidemic

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Today, 5.3 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease. But it's only going to get worse — and fast.

*Right now, we are unnecessarily losing the battle against Alzheimer's disease.*

The first of the baby boomers are now turning 65. By 2030, the U.S. population aged 65 and over is expected to double, meaning there will be more and more Americans with Alzheimer's — as many as 16 million by mid-century, when there will be nearly 1 million new cases every year.

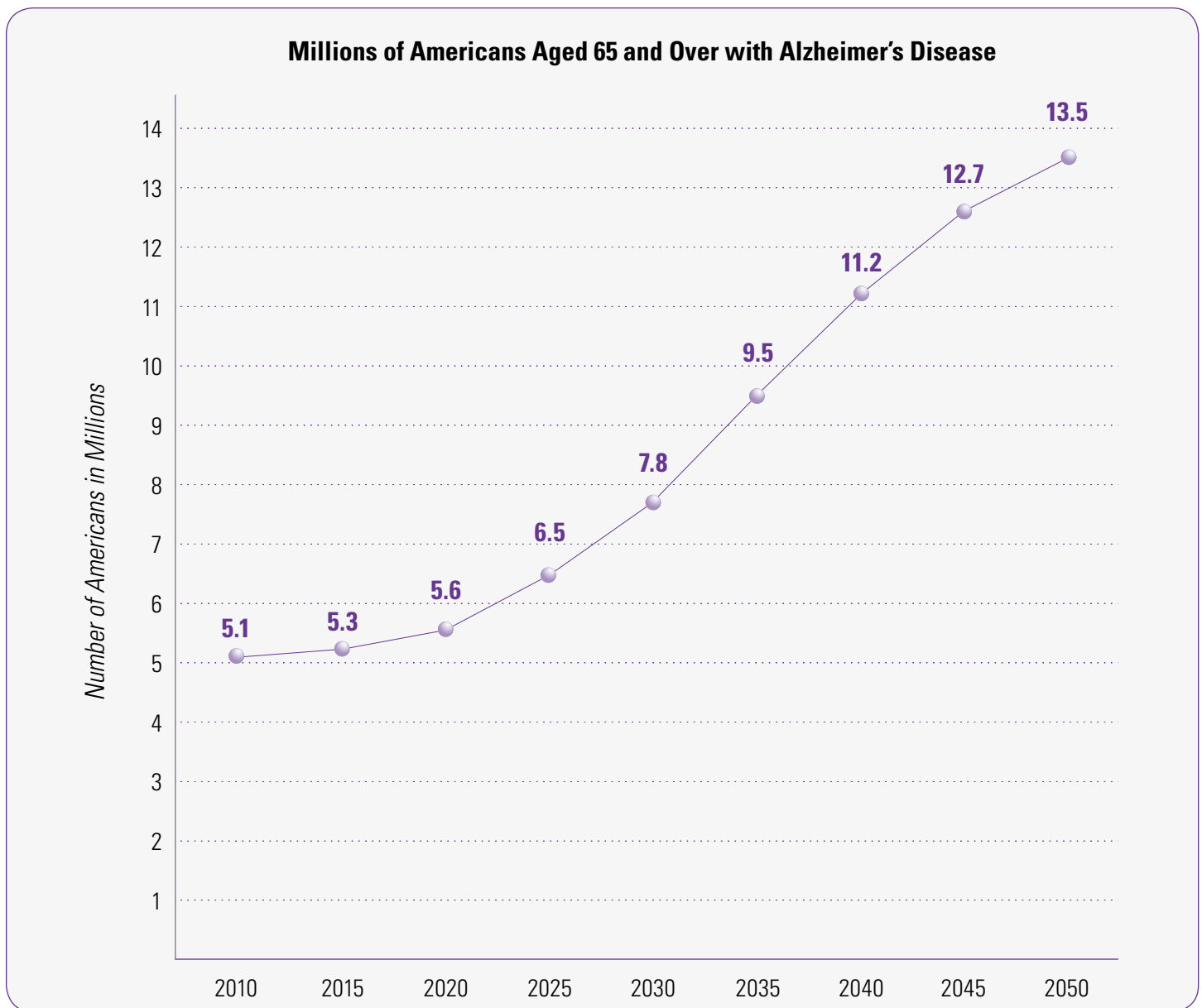
One in eight baby boomers will get the disease after they turn 65. At age 85 that risk increases to nearly one in two. And if they don't have it, chances are they will likely be caring for someone who does.

For many baby boomers, Alzheimer's was a disease they saw in their parents or grandparents. Not anymore. Alzheimer's disease is now *their* disease, *their* crisis, *their* epidemic.

“When she disappears into the bathroom and does not come out for an extended period of time, that is the signal that something is wrong. She is too proud and embarrassed to call for help, so she tries to take care of the situation herself. Of course, that makes the mess worse and more difficult for me because now I have to clean both her and the bathroom. Who on earth could ever have imagined the day would come when I would be changing the diapers of the woman who changed mine?”

— *Randy Sibbett, California*

## The Truth about Alzheimer's that Every American Should Know



- 5.3 million Americans are currently living with Alzheimer's disease — 5.1 million of them aged 65 and over.
- One in eight Americans aged 65 and over has Alzheimer's. Nearly one in two aged 85 and over has the disease.
- Every 70 seconds, someone in America develops Alzheimer's.
- With the aging of the baby boomers, the number of Americans with Alzheimer's will likely reach 13.5 million in 2050 — and could be as high as 16 million.
- 10 million baby boomers will get Alzheimer's.
- In 2050, an American will develop Alzheimer's every 33 seconds.

# Alzheimer's Is Devastating, Deteriorating and Debilitating

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Alzheimer's disease is not just a little memory loss. It eventually kills you, but not before it takes everything away — slowly, gradually, painstakingly, **inevitably**.

This devastating, deteriorating and debilitating disease is the ultimate thief — thief of memories, thief of independence, thief of control, thief of time and ultimately thief of life. Alzheimer's robs people of all bodily functions and eventually their humanity. Day by day, Alzheimer's strips away individuality, autonomy and independence. It means the loss of anything and everything you have ever known.

*Try to imagine not  
being able to take care  
of yourself.*

Try to imagine not being able to take care of yourself.

Can't dress yourself.

Can't shower yourself.

Can't go to the bathroom by yourself.

That's Alzheimer's disease.

“She has become fascinated with ‘the lady in the mirror.’ At first, she didn't recognize this lady as her own reflection. It scared her that ‘the lady’ was mocking her by following her around and imitating everything she did.”

— *Eugene Fields, Ohio*



## The Truth about Alzheimer's that Every American Should Know



- An individual will live with the increasingly devastating, debilitating and destructive effects of Alzheimer's for many years.
- Most people survive an average of four to six years after a diagnosis of Alzheimer's — but many live for as long as 20 years with the disease.
- On average, 40 percent of a person's years with Alzheimer's are spent in the most severe stage of the disease — longer than any other stage.
- By age 80, 4 percent of Americans enter a nursing home. For people with Alzheimer's, 75 percent end up in a nursing home by age 80.

# Alzheimer's Kills

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Right now, we are losing the battle against Alzheimer's disease. Death rates for other major diseases — HIV, stroke, heart disease, prostate cancer, breast cancer — are declining. Our country's significant commitment to combat these conditions has saved lives.

*Alzheimer's is not just  
a little memory loss.  
It eventually kills,  
but not before it takes  
everything away.*

But for Alzheimer's disease, the federal government's efforts have been meager, and deaths are skyrocketing. The consequence is that over 80,000 Americans die each year of Alzheimer's — but only after a very long good-bye, only after years of suffering endured by individuals, family and friends. Today, there are no Alzheimer survivors — none.

“Dawn is coming. The sun will rise and peak. I now know my mother never will rise again. But still, every morning when the sun comes, I think maybe this will be the day she will know me. This will be the day I can tell her one last time that I love her, and she'll hear me. But in my heart, I know it's over.”

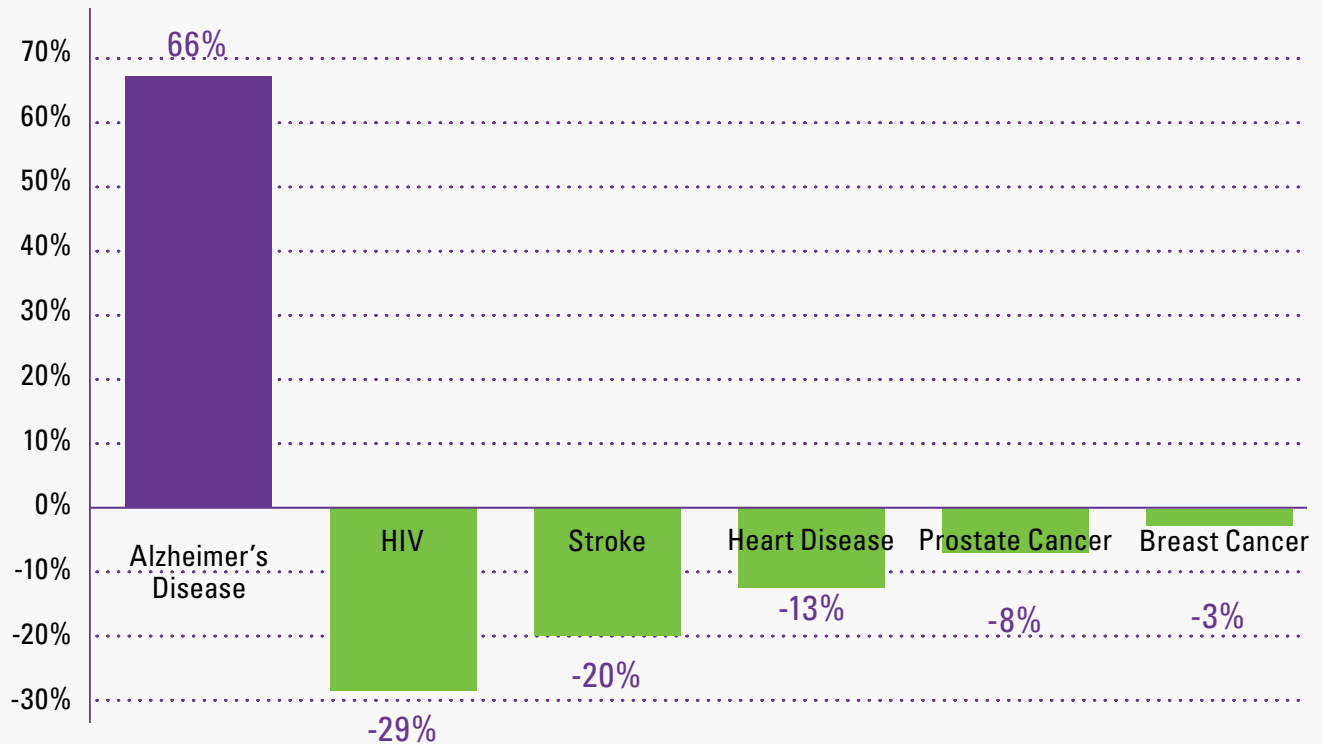
— Rob George, Texas

America means progress, solutions, results. But, Alzheimer's disease — the sixth-leading cause of death in America — remains the only one of the top 10 causes of death without an identified way to prevent it, cure it or slow its progression.

As the baby boomers begin reaching age 65, this means more deaths from Alzheimer's, more heartbreak. As the Baby Boom Generation ages, the situation is only going to deteriorate — as horribly as the disease itself — unless and until we demand a cure.

## The Truth about Alzheimer's that Every American Should Know

Change in Number of Deaths, 2000–2008



Based on preliminary 2008 mortality data.

- Alzheimer's disease is the sixth-leading cause of death in the United States.
- The number of Americans that die each year from Alzheimer's disease has risen 66 percent since 2000.
- Each year, Alzheimer's kills more Americans than breast and prostate cancer **combined**.
- Alzheimer's is the only disease in the top 10 causes of death in America without a way to prevent it, cure it or slow its progression.
- Death rates for other major diseases, including the number-one cause of death (heart disease), have declined — thanks to the government's commitment to research.



# Alzheimer's Is Heartbreaking

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Alzheimer's doesn't just affect those with the disease. The toll Alzheimer's takes on caregivers is a burden financially, physically and emotionally. Just imagine the tragedy of watching your loved one, the light of your life, slowly disappearing day by day.

Yes, the financial cost — the cost of providing care for a loved one — is significant and often beyond what is affordable. And the hidden costs, the sacrifices that have to be made by the caregiver, are just as immense.

*It's not just the people  
with Alzheimer's  
who suffer. It's also  
their caregivers.*

But this is **nothing** next to the human cost, the toll Alzheimer's takes each and every day: lost jobs, lost savings, poor health, even lost lives due to the economic, emotional and personal strain caregivers endure.

“She'd throw temper tantrums at the dinner table, scream at me, take my toys or bang on glass mirrors trying to figure out why her reflection wouldn't answer her. My grandma's behavior was sometimes so bad, it was as if she were the child, even though she was 70 years older than me. As a young girl, sometimes I wasn't sure if her behavior was her actual personality or if it was Alzheimer's that made her be mean to me and steal my Beanie Babies.”

— Alissa Anderegg, California

## The Truth about Alzheimer's that Every American Should Know



- In 2009, nearly 11 million Americans provided 12.5 billion hours of unpaid care to family members and friends with Alzheimer's disease.
- The value of this unpaid care totaled almost \$144 billion in 2009 — more than what Medicare and Medicaid spent combined on those with Alzheimer's.
- One-third of Alzheimer caregivers have been providing care for five years or more.
- Two-thirds of Alzheimer caregivers rate the emotional stress as high or very high.
- Alzheimer caregiving negatively affects health, employment, income and financial security.

# Alzheimer's Is Bankrupting America

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The graying of America means the bankrupting of America.

*We are going to pay for Alzheimer's one way or the other — now or later.*

Today, America spends \$172 billion caring for people with Alzheimer's and other dementias. With the aging of the baby boomers, Alzheimer's could bring this country to its financial knees. Costs will reach over \$1 trillion in 2050 — and that's not counting inflation.

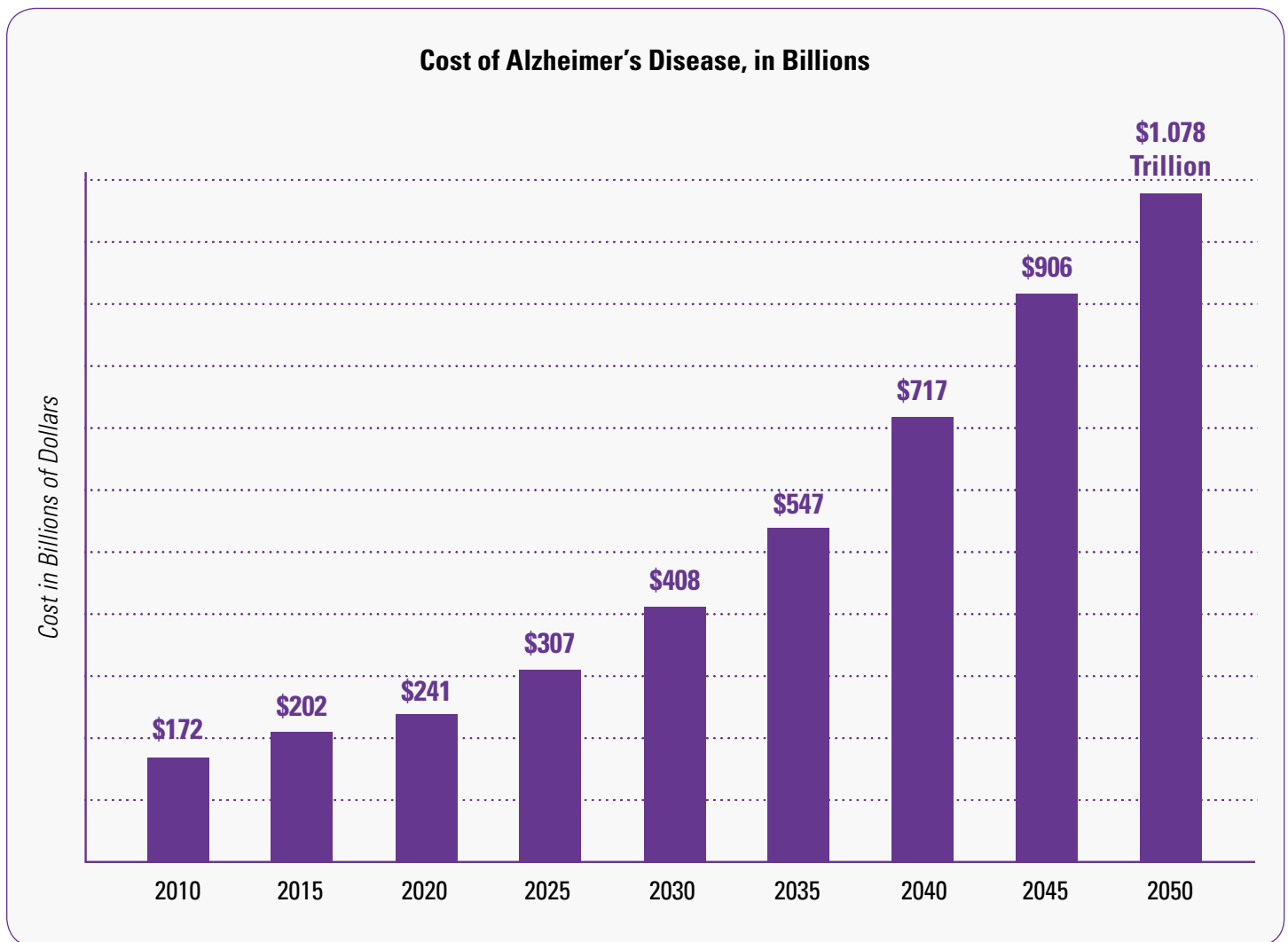
Almost half of all Alzheimer costs are paid by Medicare, where more than one in every six Medicare dollars is spent on someone with Alzheimer's disease. Curing Alzheimer's would help save Medicare.

“Since her diagnosis, my mother has steadily progressed and is no longer able to carry out simple tasks, such as washing dishes or putting on her own shoes. Recently, she has started using a cane to walk, and I find it hard to imagine the day when she will no longer be able to walk at all, feed herself or even recognize who I am. Yet I know that such a day will come.”

— Xuan Quach, California

We are going to pay for Alzheimer's one way or the other. The consequences of doing nothing will be continuing to pay for caring — and we should ensure more effective care for those with this devastating disease. But if we commit now to **curing** — to fund research that leads to a breakthrough — we can save billions of dollars. A commitment today to innovation, to finding a cure, will yield the savings of tomorrow.

## The Truth about Alzheimer's that Every American Should Know



- In 2010, Alzheimer's and other dementias cost American society — families, insurers and the government — \$172 billion.
- In 2050, those costs will increase to over \$1 trillion (in current dollars).
- Over the next 40 years, Alzheimer's will cost America over \$20 trillion, enough to pay off the national debt and still send a \$20,000 check to every man, woman and child in America.
- Between 2010 and 2050, the costs to Medicare of caring for someone with Alzheimer's will increase over 600 percent — and the cost to families in out-of-pocket costs will grow more than 400 percent.
- A person with Alzheimer's disease on average, costs Medicare three times more and costs Medicaid nine times more than someone without the disease.

## Where's the Treatment? Where's the Cure?

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The federal government currently spends much less money on Alzheimer research, prevention and a cure than on other conditions such as cancer, heart disease and HIV — \$6 billion for cancer, \$4 billion for heart disease, \$3 billion for HIV/AIDS. But just \$480 million for Alzheimer's disease.

*If you think finding a cure is expensive, consider the cost facing people living with the disease and those taking care of them.*

The consequences are plain to see.

America has made progress against cancer, heart disease and HIV because of the federal government's commitment to combat them.

We can achieve the same results for Alzheimer's disease with a similar commitment to finding a cure. With such a commitment by the federal government, we can find ways to prevent, control and cure this heartbreaking disease.

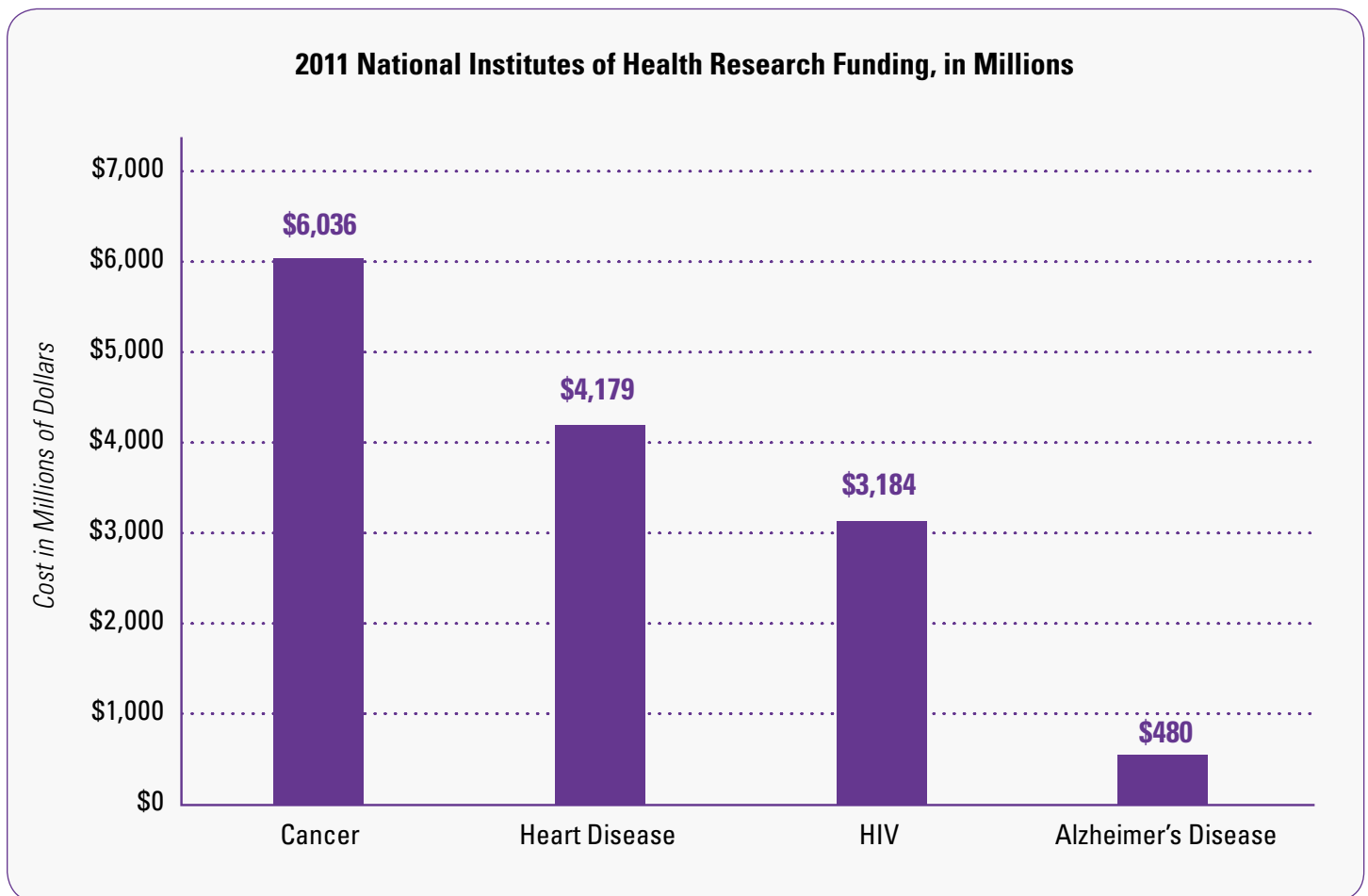
“I began to realize I wasn't the gal I used to be. It was different inside my head. I would be talking with someone on the telephone, then hang up and ask myself, ‘Who was that? What did we talk about?’ My husband says he was shocked and knew something serious was going on when we returned from a vacation together, and I told him, ‘I really had a great time in California. I'm so sorry you couldn't make it.’”

— Mary Ann Becklenberg, Indiana

We've already seen the consequences of underfunding. But there's more: we are at risk of losing a generation of scientists who are either choosing other fields or leaving research altogether. These brilliant minds are our greatest resource in this fight, and we should be applying them to our most difficult problems.



## The Truth about Alzheimer's that Every American Should Know



- The National Institutes of Health spends over \$6 billion a year on cancer research, over \$4 billion on heart and cardiovascular disease research and over \$3 billion on HIV/AIDS research — with obvious payoffs in lives saved.
- But it spends only \$480 million on Alzheimer's research — and deaths are soaring.
- For every \$100 the government spends on Alzheimer research, it spends more than \$25,000 for care for people with Alzheimer's and other dementias.
- Research leading to treatments that delay onset of Alzheimer's by just five years would cut government spending on the disease by 45 percent.

# Alzheimer's Disease Research: Genuine, Tangible, Hope

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Despite the relatively low level of funding, Alzheimer's disease research has come so far, particularly in the last 10 years. With the cooperation of the medical and research communities, we are at a tipping point. We have the ideas, the technology and the will, but we do not have the commitment from the federal government. And we have reason for genuine and tangible hope that will fundamentally change the nature of the disease.

*Scientists believe we are at a tipping point right now.*

Every day brings us closer to a cure. An additional commitment through a public-private partnership could push us over the edge, make the difference and deliver the results.

A commitment to a thorough, heartfelt and innovative approach to finding results will give us significant returns on our investment, relief to those currently suffering from the disease and peace of mind to millions of baby boomers who will otherwise get the disease. And we can do it without the government increasing its deficit. It's how and where the government spends that matters.

We should not and cannot forget or neglect those who have this devastating and heartbreaking disease today or who will get the disease tomorrow. They need better care and better support services. And their struggling, loving families need more help.

For the first time in history, there is real hope in emerging science that we can overcome Alzheimer's disease and that the day is near when Alzheimer's does **not** need to be a death sentence.



“I want my husband back. I need him more than ever now, but he’s gone. I can’t go to him for advice. I can’t go to him for emotional support. He is just like a child. He is egocentric, can’t comprehend my feelings, can’t remember what I’ve been doing. I want someone to hold me and ease my fears like he used to. Or at least I want him to know that I’m a person like he is. But he doesn’t seem to get it anymore.

I’m dealing with Alzheimer’s disease. There is no hope that it will get better. It will keep getting worse. It will keep getting harder. It will keep costing more money. I will keep doing what I’m doing. And then he will die. I pray that I stay strong so that when he is gone, I don’t blame him for my failures or hate myself because I disrespected him in any way.”

— *Laura Jones, Florida*

# Conclusion

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When it comes to Alzheimer's disease, there are no Republicans or Democrats. It affects all of us, and with baby boomers aging, it is only going to get worse — and very fast.

**We can all agree that we must find a cure for Alzheimer's.**

*Most of America's baby boomers will spend their retirement years either with Alzheimer's or caring for someone who has it.*

If you think finding a cure is expensive, consider the cost facing people living with the disease and those caring for them. Think of the financial cost of round-the-clock care. Think of the human cost in emotional stress and strain. Think of the hidden costs — the sacrifices that have to be made every day. Think of the lost jobs, the lost savings, the lost lives.

Think of the devastation. Think of the heartbreak.



And then think of the hope. The hope for treatment. The hope for prevention. The hope for a cure.

The hope for families. The hope for the baby boomers who will soon get the disease.

Scientists believe we are on the verge of realizing that hope. The only unanswered questions are: Will we have the resources to push it over the edge and to make the difference? Will the federal government make the commitment to an innovative approach that will yield results, a return on our investment and the cure we so desperately need?

Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's disease. Let's make Alzheimer's disease a distant memory.

**This is a fight we can win.**

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research.

Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's disease.

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