



San Diego News

New Plan Addresses Increase In Alzheimer's Cases

Research: 1.1 Million Californians To Have Alzheimer's By 2030

POSTED: 9:16 pm PDT April 4, 2011

UPDATED: 10:10 pm PDT April 4, 2011

SAN DIEGO -- A drastic increase in Alzheimer's cases has prompted state leaders to come up with a 10-year plan to deal with the growing number of patients.

For 27 years, the Glenner Alzheimer's Family Centers have provided care and support for families and patients in the county dealing with the debilitating disease. Their facility in Hillcrest provides adult day care for patients ranging in age from 60 to 104.

Caregivers told 10News they have never seen such a need for their services.

"We have had funding cuts for our services and the need is growing not receding," said Margaret Galante, a registered nurse and the program director at the Glenner Center in Hillcrest.

Currently, 590,000 Californians live with the disease. A study by the Alzheimer's Association shows that number jumping to 1.1 million by 2030.

Dawn Westbrook said she had to give up her insurance business to care for her father full time after he was diagnosed in 2006.

"People don't realize until they're in it how devastating it is," said Westbrook.

Westbrook's family is among 90,000 families in San Diego who are coping with the disease. Westbrook said she relies on the Glenner Center for their detailed care focused on activities that are essential for patients.

"It's been an absolute godsend because it's actually probably increased his capacity to be able to function," she said.

A 10-year state plan wants in part to resume funding for research that was cut two years ago and increase caregiver support. But as state legislators struggle with closing a \$26 billion deficit, nonprofits such as Glenner worry about the impact on patients.

"The individuals that are suffering from these dementing diseases have been our caregivers and I think we owe them the respect and the care that they're due," said Galante.

Gov. Jerry Brown has already proposed cutting an adult day care health program that helps to fund 330 centers statewide.