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www.alzmgreatlakes.org

Understanding the Dangers of Wandering *Safe Return Program Offers Safety, Peace of Mind for Families*

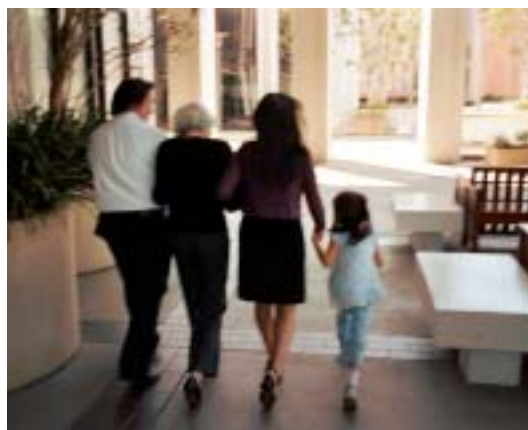
Wandering is one of the most frightening and potentially life-threatening behaviors that may accompany Alzheimer's disease. As many as 60 percent of the 4.5 million Americans with Alzheimer's disease will wander at some point, often leaving home and unable to find their way back.

The statistics related to wandering behavior are frightening: ***If a person is lost and not found within 24 hours, the chance for serious injury and even death is nearly 50 percent.*** This holds especially true during the cold winter months when individuals are vulnerable to harsh weather conditions.

Wandering can happen anytime or anyplace during the progression of Alzheimer's disease and if a person wanders once, it is likely that he will again (*see page 4 for tips to help reduce wandering*). Wandering can be triggered by a number of factors including:

- ✓ ***Medication***
- ✓ ***Stress, restlessness, anxiety, agitation***
- ✓ ***Inability to recognize familiar people, places or objects***
- ✓ ***A desire to fulfill former obligations such as going to work or caring for a child***
- ✓ ***The need for food, companionship or communication***
- ✓ ***Fear arising from a misinterpretation of sights and sounds.***

Although most wandering takes place on foot, some people with Alzheimer's have been known to drive hundreds of miles —



Mark Luinenburg/Alzheimer's Association

sometimes in a vehicle that belongs to someone else. People with Alzheimer's also have traveled great distances by train, airplane and other public transportation.

While no one can predict which individuals with Alzheimer's will wander, there is a place where families can turn for help.

The Alzheimer's Association's Safe Return program offers families safety and peace of mind in protecting a loved one from the dangerous consequences of wandering. Safe Return is a nationwide identification program that helps return individuals with Alzheimer's disease who wander and become lost. The government-funded program operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and has a success rate of nearly 100 percent in safely returning those registered in the program.

Since the program's founding in 1993, the Alzheimer's Association has registered more than 100,000 people with Alzheimer's disease in the Safe Return program. To date, the program has facilitated the

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Safe Return

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recovery of nearly 8,000 individuals who have wandered and safely returned them to their families and caregivers.

Ypsilanti resident Sam Taylor is one of the program's 8,000 success stories. His daughter and caregiver Carrie Lewis is grateful that the Safe Return program helped to return her father safely. Even though Carrie had an alarm system installed at her home, her father managed to slip out the front door on a cold and snowy February day. Carrie had checked on him just minutes earlier.

Fortunately, Sam ventured just a short distance from home before walking into a nearby dentist's office and sitting down. While he smiled and nodded at the office staff, he was unable to give them any information. The office staff contacted the sheriff's department who discovered Sam's Safe Return bracelet. With one quick call, Sam was reunited with his daughter.

"Had he kept walking, there's no telling what would have happened," Carrie said. "I'm so grateful he walked inside the dentist's office. I don't try to reflect on what could have happened, just what did happen."

Carrie is now an outspoken advocate for Safe Return, encouraging her fellow Alzheimer support group members to register for the program.

"I try to push the Safe Return program on everyone I know who has a loved one with Alzheimer's," Carrie said. "Safe Return is there to help."

Safe Return provides assistance whether a person becomes lost locally, like Sam Taylor did, or far from home. By completing a simple registration form and submit-

ting a photograph, family members can register their loved one in Safe Return. Safe Return provides registrants and their families with a personalized bracelet and other identification materials. Information about the person with Alzheimer's is placed in a confidential computerized database and the program's toll-free 800 number is listed on the identification pieces.

When a Safe Return registrant wanders and is found, the person who finds him can call the toll-free number listed on the identification pieces. Safe Return staff immediately alert the family member or caregiver listed in the database to be reunited with their loved one. If a person is reported missing by a family member or caregiver, Safe Return faxes the missing person's information and photograph to local law enforcement agencies. Alzheimer's Association staff provide family support and assistance while police conduct the search and rescue.

Safe Return registration can be done by phone, mail or online; the registration fee is \$40. For this fee, families receive:

- an engraved identification bracelet or necklace and iron-on clothing labels
- *Caregiver Checklist*, key chain, lapel pin, refrigerator magnet, stickers and wallet card
- option to purchase caregiver jewelry for an additional \$5 (alerts others that you provide care for a person registered in Safe Return).

Safe Return scholarships are available to families who are unable to pay the \$40 fee. To register or to learn more about the Safe Return program, call the chapter office nearest you at 800.337.3827.



Resources

Books

“The Complete Guide To Alzheimer’s Proofing Your Home”

Warner
Purdue University Press,
2000
\$26.00

Provides information on outfitting the interiors and exteriors of homes and discusses how to cope with potential problems related to safety.

“Understanding Difficult Behaviors”

Robinson, Spencer and White
Eastern Michigan University, 1999
\$15.00

A book for family and professional caregivers that provides concrete, practical advice on coping with behaviors such as agitation, wandering and personal care issues.

Brochures/Fact Sheets

“Steps to Ensuring Safety: Preventing Wandering and Getting Lost”

Alzheimer’s Association
1999, reprinted 2003

“Steps to Enhancing Your Home: Modifying the Environment”

Alzheimer’s Association
1999, reprinted 2003

To obtain these and other resources, call the chapter office nearest you at 800.337.3827 or visit www.alzmgreatlakes.org

Chapter News

Save the Date for Upcoming Schreiber Conference

Save the date for the sixth Dr. Richard Seyfarth Schreiber Memorial Conference on May 18, 2004 in Kalamazoo. The conference, titled ***“Alzheimer’s Journey: Realistic Approaches to Quality Care,”*** will feature keynote speaker Anna Ortigara, RN, a nationally renowned expert on dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. Ortigara will talk about person-centered care, relationships and culture change. Featured topics for conference breakout sessions include: understanding behaviors, Benevolent Touch, Gentle Care, pharmaceutical treatment for behavior modification, end of life care, meaningful activities and research advances. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) will be available. Sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities are available. For information, call 269.342.1482.

“Answers on Alzheimer’s” Program Expands

In 2003, the chapter piloted the ***“Answers on Alzheimer’s”*** program which provides people with dementia and their care partners an opportunity to meet one-on-one with Alzheimer’s Association staff for support, education, problem solving and referrals to appropriate programs and services. The program is free, confidential and open to the public. Appointments are available at all chapter office locations; call 800.337.3827 to schedule an appointment. The chapter, which expanded the program to Adrian, Monroe and Brighton in 2003, will offer appointments in these locations every other month beginning in January 2004. In addition, the chapter will begin offering this program in Newaygo County at the Newaygo County Commission on Aging in White Cloud. One-hour appointments are currently available for January 27 and March 23, 2004 between 11:30 am and 3:30 pm. Please contact the Commission on Aging at 231.689.2100 to schedule an appointment.

Hundreds Attend Research Presentations

More than 300 people attended the chapter’s ***“Advances in Alzheimer Research”*** presentations in Kalamazoo, Lansing, Ann Arbor, Jackson and Muskegon in November. Area physicians presented the latest developments in Alzheimer research and treatment options and answered questions from the audience. The presentations were held during National Alzheimer’s Disease Month.



More than 50 people turned out in Jackson to hear Dr. Marvin Fields present the latest research findings.

West Shore Office Moves to New Location

The West Shore regional office recently moved to a new location. Having outgrown previous office space, we are now better equipped to serve clients. The West Shore office is now located at 1060 W. Norton Ave., Suite 2, Muskegon. The office has new telephone and fax numbers — 231.780.1922 (phone) and 231.780.1494 (fax). Please join us for an Open House on February 3, 2004 from 3:00 - 5:30 p.m. at our new location.

