

Dementia: A Public Health Priority

WHO report on Alzheimer's disease

Eric Lamoureux
Director, Public Affairs
Alzheimer Society of Canada



Dementia: A Public Health Priority

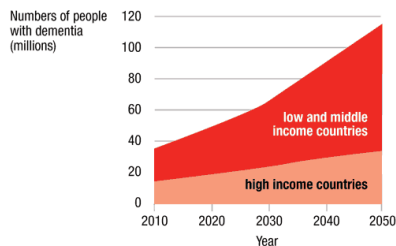
Worldwide, nearly 35.6 million people live with dementia.

This number is expected to double by 2030 (65.7 million) and more than triple by 2050 (115.4 million).

Dementia affects people in all countries, with more than half (58%) living in low- and middle-income countries. By 2050, this is likely to rise to more than 70%.

Treating and caring for people with dementia currently costs the world more than US\$ 604 billion per year.

The growth in numbers of people with dementia in high income countries and low and middle income countries

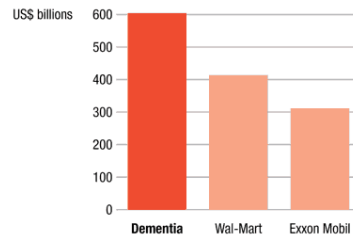


Worldwide Costs of Dementia

If dementia care were a country, it would be the world's 18th largest economy, ranking between Turkey and Indonesia.

If dementia care were a company, it would be the world's largest by annual revenue exceeding Wal-Mart (US\$414 billion) and Exxon Mobil (US\$311 billion).

Cost of dementia compared to company revenue



Reducing stigma

The report points to a general lack of information and understanding about dementia.

This fuels stigma, which in turn contributes to the social isolation of both the person with dementia and their caregivers, and can lead to delays in seeking diagnosis, health assistance and social support.



Support for caregivers

Strengthening care is also key. In every region of the world, most caregiving is provided by informal caregivers - spouses, adult children, other family members and friends.

The report notes that people who care for a person with dementia are themselves particularly prone to mental disorders, such as depression and anxiety, and are often in poor physical health themselves.



Improving Early Diagnosis

Lack of diagnosis is a major problem. Even in high-income countries, only one fifth to one half of cases of dementia are routinely recognized.

When a diagnosis is made, it often comes at a relatively late stage of the disease.



Solution: The call for a national dementia plan

Eight countries worldwide currently have national programmes in place to address dementia.

The report recommends that programmes focus on improving early diagnosis; raising public awareness about the disease and reducing stigma; and providing better care and more support to caregivers.

**A National Dementia Plan
Lead by the Federal Government
and Implemented by the Provinces**

Advocacy

Advocacy objectives include, among others: the promotion of human rights of the persons with mental disorders and of their families, and monitoring the life conditions of people with mental illness and their families.



Successful advocacy efforts

- Motivate the decision-makers;
- Organize and launch with interested parties anti-stigma programmes in all population groups;
- Collaborate with the media by, for example, informing more objectively about problems and solutions, creating a cultural change with regard to issues related to mental disorders;
- Promote, with all parties concerned, programmes leading to reduce the burden of the selected disorders noted above and the risk factors for suicide, particularly of the young, and the provision of support to the survivors; and
- Authoritatively inform decision-makers regarding the mental health impact of economic and social policies

Our efforts

Top Points

- ✓ Federal Budget
 - ✓ The WHO report
 - ✓ House of Commons Health Committee
 - ✓ Mental Health Commission of Canada
- Council of the Federation
World Alzheimer's Day
Mental Health Commission of Canada (full report)