

Editorial

The Prevalence of Alzheimer's Disease

In this issue we feature a major report on Alzheimer's Disease by Professor Harold D. Foster. This conforms to our tradition, which now spans over thirty years, of allowing scientists to examine a topic in great depth so that our readers can grasp its significance without having to refer back to other articles. For the research investigator the extensive references provide him or her with an unparalleled opportunity to start their own studies into this dread and rapidly growing disease.

Alzheimer's disease is as prevalent as schizophrenia, probably affecting over four million people in Canada and the United States, and is growing rapidly. In contrast to schizophrenia which strikes at the beginning of life's most productive period, this senile psychosis strikes at the end. I see few situations as tragic as the loss of a spouse or parent to this incipient, irresistible, overwhelming conversion of a normal, fully functional and productive human being into a shell of the same person, shuffling toward a merciful death for both victim and family. The incidence of schizophrenia has remained constant over the past century but the incidence of Alzheimer's is increasing. When I started in psychiatry it was extremely rare, but today it is overwhelming. We therefore need as much investigation of the facts as possible and as much good hypothesis formation as possible so that we can allocate funds in the right direction. We need to spend a lot more money searching out the multiple causes of Alzheimer's and less money looking for new drugs. Drugs cannot restore abnormal body reactions. For this we must use molecules that are normally found in life, we have to use orthomolecular theory and practice. We must identify the toxins, remove them from the environment, discover the vulnerable part of the population so that preventive measures can be started early and use any treatment that is shown to be effective and is not toxic.

A Nurse Writes of Her Mother's Recovery

Now and then we publish first person accounts of patients who describe their experiences with schizophrenia and other diseases. These are very valuable in creating understanding of these diseases. They also reveal the problems facing families who want their daughters, sons and parents to have the best of modern treatment, meaning orthomolecular treatment. The following is such an account written by an intelligent nurse, who has been familiar with orthomolecular treatment for over 30 years since it helped several members of her family become well.

—A. Hoffer M.D., Ph.D.

My Mother turned 98 in 1998. In 1991 Mother suffered a stroke, followed by several small strokes. In May 1997 she was placed in a nursing home which cooperated with her vitamin program for about five weeks. She improved a lot, but in June 1998 she began to deteriorate.

Mother had been one of the finest nurses in the country and remained active until she was 78 years old. We finally persuaded her to retire and move in with us. Later she moved with us to another state and she was well until age 91. She drove her own car, would go shopping up to 20 miles away, made her own medical appointments, made sure that she kept them, had cataract surgery, and helped with the books for her grandson's business. She told me she felt "fit as a fiddle." Then she got pneumonia and a little later atrial fibrillation which lasted about four days. A week later she suffered a stroke. She went to the hospital and made a good recovery. She cooperated with treatment, doing all the necessary physical exercises and speech therapy. But her beautiful singing voice was gone.

When she was 95 we moved back to our previous residence. She was able to help with small errands and enjoyed doing so. Later in her 96th year she began to fall and had more small strokes. She rapidly went

downhill, began to hallucinate and to live in the past. She became more confused, frustrated and often angry, and we could not reason with her. Her behaviour became more aggressive. Once she injured her 13 year old granddaughter. Her behaviour continued to deteriorate and she began to fight with her grandchildren as if they were unreasonable adults. After several serious aggressive attacks on me, my family became alarmed that I might be hurt. Later Mother no longer recognized me nor other members of our family.

About this time I heard a report on radio about megavitamins successfully reversing senility. I called Dr. Hoffer's office and his secretary advised me to read *Smart Nutrients*. Three months later (after being on the vitamin regime proposed by the book) Mother made a sensible statement for the first time in a long time but became more irritable and her behaviour more bizarre. By the fourth month she was better, recognized her family, began to read—she had not done so for years—but the strain on my husband and me was so great we thought we could not cope any longer.

We then placed her in the nursing home in May 1997. This excellent nursing home maintained her vitamin program for about five weeks and mother continued to improve. We were pleased with our visits. She began to use a featherweight sewing machine to make material for a crib quilt, something she had helped me with many years before. She also got a boyfriend, who was confined to a wheelchair, who told me, "I think I have fallen in love with your mother."

At the end of five weeks we were told by the doctor that if I still insisted on the program he was afraid the nurses would refuse to keep her there. The problem was that she was itching. I gave her slow release niacin which they gave her for a week, then absolutely refused any more nutrients. But Mother has always complained of itching. This is a family characteristic. The nurses gave her tons of benadryl but she still con-

tinued to itch as she has always done, even when not taking niacin.

She remained improved until recently. She enjoyed visits from her boyfriend and writing short notes to him. But this stopped, she became more sleepy and her behaviour deteriorated again and recently she kicked a nurse. She has been off vitamins since July 1997.

Recently the Director of Nursing told me that Mother had been deteriorating for six months and she wanted to know what they should do. I hope they will permit Mother to start back on the vitamins. I used to give her niacinamide and now and then put in some niacin. I hope to start a similar program again. "It seems so awful to see her losing her mind and abilities, after she was doing so well."