



**THE ALZHEIMER'S Project**  
Prevention – Care – Community Support

**ANNUAL REPORT • 2022**



LIVE WELL  
SAN DIEGO



# Introduction

County of San Diego (County) epidemiologists have estimated that there are approximately 100,000 people living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) in San Diego County and the prevalence is expected to reach 115,000 by 2030. Since the launch of The Alzheimer's Project on May 6, 2014 (05), the County has been paving the way for improved dementia care with its innovative approach to addressing the impacts of ADRD in the region. Despite new challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Project leaders have made significant strides in the areas of clinical response, caregiver support, and education. In addition to County funding, several grants have supported the work of The Alzheimer's Project. Most notably, in 2020, a two-year grant from the California Department of Public Health was received for implementation of national Healthy Brain Initiative (HBI) strategies. These efforts support The Alzheimer's Project vision of a region where San Diegans have the information they need to reduce their risk of ADRD; residents with ADRD receive the highest standard of clinical care; individuals with ADRD are well cared for and supported by "Dementia-Friendly" communities to be as independent as possible; and family members have the support they need to care for their loved ones.

Primary care physicians are on the frontlines of dementia care due to the limited availability of specialists. This shortage, coupled with minimal guidance for non-specialists on how to effectively screen, evaluate, and manage the diseases that cause dementia (e.g. Alzheimer's, Vascular, Parkinson's, and more), has illuminated the critical need for more physician education, resources, and support. The Clinical Roundtable of the Alzheimer's Project—comprised of neurologists, psychiatrists, geriatricians, and other members of the clinical community—have helped address this need by lending expertise regarding medical care for those living with the disease, promoting clinical standards and guidelines, identifying resources, and providing tools for effective communication.

Caregivers are vital to ensuring the health, safety, and wellbeing of those living with ADRD. With the demand for care rising and the growing shortage of professional caregivers, family caregivers are the backbone of the long-term care system for older adults. Empowering caregivers in their role so that they may continue to provide quality care is essential to the sustainability of the regional care infrastructure. San Diego County's caregiver support network is comprised of healthcare providers, experts in dementia, family caregivers, residential and day care providers, public safety representatives, and community organizations. The caregiver support component of The Alzheimer's Project focuses on increasing resources for caregivers and building connections between clinical and social services available to families impacted by ADRD.

There is a lack of awareness and understanding of ADRD leading to stigma, barriers to seeking care, and inadequate knowledge of how to recognize and respond to the needs of those living with the disease. Additionally, the role of healthy lifestyle behaviors in preventing or delaying cognitive decline is not widely known, underscoring the need for public education. A strong network of County and community organizations collaborate to equip the community, professionals, caregivers, and stakeholders with the resources and skills necessary to support San Diegans living with the disease.

This latest annual report showcases the work of The Alzheimer's Project and related dementia initiatives in San Diego County.







## Clinical Roundtable

National and local shortages of neurologists and other specialists have alarming consequences for the care of people with ADRD, including delays in detection and treatment of these diseases. Early detection can allow impacted patients to get treatment and participate in clinical trials with promising pharmaceuticals when these interventions are most likely to be beneficial, and patients and their loved ones have time to get resources in place and make plans to ensure a higher quality of life for as long as possible. The Clinical Roundtable was formed in 2015, bringing together geriatricians, neurologists, and other medical specialists from across the major health systems in San Diego County. Due to the shortage of specialists, primary care physicians are on the frontlines of dementia care, but they have not historically had the tools or information necessary to provide the highest standard of care. The

Clinical Roundtable developed the *Physician Guidelines for the Screening, Evaluation, and Management of Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (Guidelines)*, to equip primary care clinicians with the knowledge and tools they need. The *Guidelines* were first released in 2016 and updated regularly thereafter, and are available in print, online, and as a mobile application (AlzDxRx). The *Guidelines* include best practice algorithms, screening and evaluation instruments, information on FDA-approved medications, information on care through the disease stages, and resources for clinicians and caregivers.

Clinical Roundtable physicians have identified a need to embed certain aspects of the *Guidelines* into their organizations' electronic medical record (EMR) systems, such as patient scores on cognitive instruments. Inclusion of these fields would improve patient process tracking and assure systemic screening and diagnosis, but many EMR systems lack similar fields for ADRD information. In the past year, even though healthcare providers have been incredibly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Clinical Roundtable members have garnered commitments from several local health systems to integrate screening instruments and evaluation score fields into their respective EMR systems. These system changes are likely to make a lasting improvement in ADRD care going forward.

Educating middle aged patients on dementia prevention is a new approach in most clinical environments. Primary care physicians have continued to disseminate the Healthy Body, Healthy Mind handout which encourages patients to engage in healthy lifestyle behaviors—such as eating a balanced diet, getting regular exercise, and being socially involved—to reduce ADRD risk. This represents a unique multiple health system effort to educate patients on actions they can take early in life to promote brain health.

## FY 21-22 Achievements

- **1,018 healthcare providers** received training on the use of the *Guidelines*, bringing the total number trained to more than **4,800**.
- More than **3,800 Healthy Body, Healthy Mind patient education handouts**, as well as **exam room posters** encouraging the importance of screening were disseminated to providers and physician offices.
- A series of articles written by Clinical Roundtable members and published in the San Diego Physician magazine (January through June 2022) was viewed by **11,600 providers monthly**. Articles highlighted the clinician's role screening and evaluation, behavioral management, pharmacotherapy, caregiver health and wellbeing, and brain health education.
- **Kaiser Permanente, Scripps, and UC San Diego Health** among others have committed to integrating screening instruments and evaluation score fields into their EMR systems.



County epidemiologists estimate that approximately 292,556 San Diegans are currently caring for someone with ADRD. In collaboration with community-based organizations that serve caregivers and individuals living with dementia, County Health and Human Services Agency (HHS), Aging & Independence Services (AIS) has continued to provide services, tools and information to support individuals in their caregiving journey. The Caregiver Coalition of San Diego hosted several conferences and events online as part of its ongoing effort to provide education on a wide range of topics, including how to prepare for emergencies, access veterans' caregiver programs, and take the stress out of the holiday season. Additionally, the Caregiver Coalition's Caregiver Handbook was printed in five threshold languages (English, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Arabic). Efforts are currently underway to translate this valuable resource into additional threshold languages (Persian, Korean, Somali, and Chinese Mandarin) resulting in a more equitable approach to information-sharing.



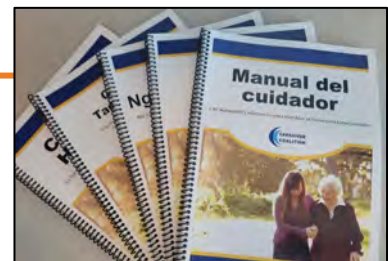
## Caregiver Support

Due to circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic, many individuals and families experienced a need for increased respite. Respite gives caregivers valuable time away from their caregiving duties while allowing the person living with ADRD to receive care in a safe environment. In partnership with its contractors, the County has provided thousands of hours of respite to caregivers in need. Through the National Family Caregiver Support Program, clients received free respite and had access to information and education services, caregiver counseling, and case management. Additionally, through the Respite Voucher Program, clients received cost-reduced respite including in-home care, companion care, adult daycare, overnight respite, and out-of-home care.

The County has continued to support programs that provide specialized assistance in the event of an emergency or crisis. Adult Protective Services has a specialized program called the Alzheimer's Response Team (ART). This program helps older adults with dementia access support services when they are in crisis so that they can avoid ending up in the emergency department or in law enforcement custody. Originally created as a pilot project in East County, the initiative was recently expanded to serve all areas of the county. ART was expanded to accept referrals county-wide in January 2022, providing individuals with ADRD and their loved ones with informed crisis response and intervention, as well as care coordination.

## FY 21-22 Achievements

- Southern Caregiver Resource Center and Coast Care Partners provided more than **57,000 hours of cost-reduced respite** to approximately **1,275 ADRD caregivers** through the County's Respite Voucher Program.
- Southern Caregiver Resource Center provided more than **23,500 hours of free respite** to over **400 ADRD caregivers** through the National Family Caregiver Support Program.
- More than **150 caregivers, professionals, and community members** attended events and conferences on caregiver issues.
- ART received over **795 referrals**, resulting in over **545 visits** by the crisis response team this fiscal year.





## Public Awareness & Education

In a dementia-friendly community, individuals are well-informed and can recognize and respond effectively to the needs of individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. AIS' Outreach & Education Team has continued to educate the community on the causes and warning signs of ADRD through outreach events and presentations. As the region's Master Dementia Friends Champion, AIS has continued to provide informative sessions that draw contrast between normal signs of aging and signs of cognitive impairment, as well as promote best practices for effectively interacting with someone living with dementia. Collectively, these efforts can help change attitudes and public perceptions about dementia, as well as reduce the stigma that prevents people living with ADRD from actively participating in community life.

An all-sectors approach is needed to create public spaces that are welcoming and inclusive of individuals living with dementia. The Age Well Dementia Team has engaged senior centers, senior living communities, libraries, faith-based institutions, and banks in efforts to make their settings more dementia-friendly. This has been accomplished through trainings or materials that address sector-specific dementia-friendly practices. Because individuals living with dementia can be at greater risk for abuse and neglect due to impaired judgement and communication difficulties, these dementia education efforts included information on abuse prevention and reporting instructions to promote vigilance in these settings. The AIS elder abuse training was also revised to include more information on dementia.

Historically, public health professionals have not addressed brain health, but in recent years, research has shown that up to 40% of ADRD cases could be prevented or delayed by engaging in healthy lifestyle behaviors—such as eating healthy, being physically active, and staying socially engaged—throughout the lifespan. A primary goal of national and local efforts of the Healthy Brain Initiative is to advance cognitive health as an integral component of public health. HHSA's Public Health Services has led efforts to educate public health professionals on dementia, the role of public health in dementia response, and information and tools to support public health action.

## FY 21-22 Achievements

- **More than 600 mandated reporters** that received elder and dependent adult abuse training are better equipped to recognize ADRD and respond to incidents of abuse.
- **18 City and County library staff** attended virtual Dementia Friends Information Sessions and learned about the role of libraries in cultivating dementia-friendly communities; tips for communicating with library patrons with dementia; environmental considerations for libraries; and library programs that are suitable for individuals living with dementia and their caregivers.
- **70 public health professionals** participated in trainings on dementia, dementia caregiving, the role of public health, and sources of information, tools, and assistance to support public health action.



# Looking Ahead

## *Next Steps for Improving Clinical Care, Expanding Caregiver Supports, and Education on ADRD*

The Alzheimer's Project has made significant progress in addressing the toll of ADRD; however, as the number of older adults continues to rise, the number of people affected by these diseases is also projected to rise. There is still more work to be done to improve clinical care for patients at-risk or diagnosed with ADRD; to expand services and supports available to family caregivers; and to raise awareness and understanding of ADRD in all community sectors. Next steps for The Alzheimer's Project are outlined below.

### Clinical Roundtable

- **Work with all San Diego health systems and federally qualified health centers to train more primary care providers on a standardized best practices in care for ADRD utilizing the *Guidelines*.**
- **Assess the uptake and usefulness in clinical practice of the Healthy Body, Healthy Mind patient education handout and the exam room poster that encourages dementia screening.**
- **Encourage the integration of screening and evaluation instruments into EMR with all health systems countywide to improve the early diagnosis and treatment of older adults affected by ADRD.**

### Caregiver Support

- **Work with members of the Clinical Roundtable to further increase awareness among healthcare providers of the wide variety of local caregiver resources.**
- **Provide respite and other services that help caregivers to maintain their wellbeing.**

### Public Awareness & Education

- **Promote healthy lifestyle factors as a means of preventing or delaying ADRD in messaging and engagement efforts.**
- **Work with public health professionals to further integrate brain health topics into ongoing public health education.**
- **Equip community sectors such as banks and restaurants with information about dementia and ways to create a more dementia-friendly environment.**



# Acknowledgements – FY 2021-22 Partners

## Clinical Roundtable

Michael Lobatz, MD, Scripps Health,  
The Neurology Center of Southern  
California (Committee Chair)  
Alvarado Hospital Medical Center  
Alzheimer's Association San  
Diego/Imperial Chapter  
Alzheimer's San Diego  
Champions for Health (formerly San  
Diego County Medical Society  
Foundation)  
County of San Diego Health and  
Human Services Agency, Aging &  
Independence Services

County of San Diego Health and  
Human Services Agency, Medical  
Care Services  
Kaiser Permanente  
Palomar Health Medical Group  
Perlman Clinic  
San Diego State University  
Scripps Health  
Sharp HealthCare  
Sharp Rees-Stealy Medical Group  
Southern California Permanente  
Medical Group  
Southern Caregiver Resource Center

The Elizabeth Hospice  
The George G. Glenner Alzheimer's  
Family Centers, Inc.  
The Neurology Center of Southern  
California  
TrueCare  
UC San Diego  
UC San Diego Shiley-Marcos  
Alzheimer's Disease Research Center  
Vista Community Clinic

## Caregiver Support and Public Awareness & Education Partners

101 Mobility of San Diego  
Aaron Home Care  
AARP  
Aging & Independence Services  
Advisory Council  
Alliance Healthcare Foundation  
Always Best Care Senior Services  
Alzheimer's Association San  
Diego/Imperial Chapter  
Alzheimer's San Diego  
California Relay Services  
California Telephone Access Program  
Caregiver Coalition of San Diego  
Coast Care Partners  
ComForCare Home Care  
Consumer Advocates for RCFE Reform  
Consumer Center for Health Education  
and Advocacy  
County of San Diego Health and  
Human Services Agency, Aging &  
Independence Services  
County of San Diego Health and  
Human Services Agency, Public Health  
Services

County of San Diego Sheriff's  
Department  
Elder Law & Advocacy/Health  
Insurance Counseling & Advocacy  
Program  
ElderHelp of San Diego  
For Love & Art  
Foundation for Senior Care  
Gary & Mary West Program of All-  
Inclusive Care for the Elderly  
Home Instead Senior Care  
IHSS Public Authority  
Jewish Family Service of San Diego  
Meals on Wheels San Diego County  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
San Diego  
NeuroLab 360  
Oasis Senior Advisors  
Parkinson's Association of San Diego  
Parkinson and Other Movement  
Disorder Center  
Point Loma Nazarene University  
San Diego Community College District  
San Diego County Sheriff's Department

San Diego Military and Veterans  
Advisory Council  
San Diego Program of All-Inclusive Care  
for the Elderly  
San Diego State University  
San Diego Union-Tribune  
San Diego VA Caregiver Support  
Program  
Sharp HospiceCare  
Sharp Senior Resource Center  
Silver Linings Transitions  
Solutions for Change  
Southern Caregiver Resource Center  
Southwest Lifeline  
St. Paul's Senior Services  
The George G. Glenner Alzheimer's  
Family Centers, Inc.  
Time to Move Care Placement  
Union of Pan Asian Communities  
Windward Life Care

## Online Resources

**The Alzheimer's Project**  
[www.sdalzheimersproject.org](http://www.sdalzheimersproject.org)

**Aging Roadmap**  
[www.livewellsd.org/agingroadmap](http://www.livewellsd.org/agingroadmap)

**Clinical Roundtable materials**  
[www.championsforhealth.org/alzheimers](http://www.championsforhealth.org/alzheimers)

**Data on ADRD in San Diego County**  
[www.sdhealthstatistics.com](http://www.sdhealthstatistics.com)

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