
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Toni Williams, 202.638.8666; toni.williams@alz.org

**SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION CONSIDERS ADDING
ALZHEIMER'S TO ITS COMPASSIONATE ALLOWANCES LIST**
-Alzheimer's Association Statement-

Chicago, July 29, 2009 – Today there are an estimated 5.3 million Americans with Alzheimer's disease. Although the majority of Alzheimer cases are individuals age 65 and older, there is still a significant number of individuals under age 65 impacted by this fatal disease that has no cure. For people under age 65 with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia, their cognitive impairment can quickly reach a point where they can no longer maintain gainful employment. The Alzheimer's Association applauds the Social Security Administration (SSA) for holding a hearing today to examine whether these individuals with younger-onset Alzheimer's disease or related dementias should be included in its Compassionate Allowances Initiative.

"Alzheimer's and other neurodegenerative dementias are progressive and currently there aren't any effective treatments to delay onset or progression. These individuals affected are unable to work and eventually they get Social Security disability — sometimes after a long, difficult process and many appeals," says Harry Johns, president and CEO of the Alzheimer's Association. "Through the Compassionate Allowances process, Social Security can avoid the extra costs to the agency of numerous appeals, and families can avoid the financial and emotional toll of going through a long decision process."

Under the Compassionate Allowances initiative, there is a recognized class of medical conditions and diseases that are severely debilitating or life-threatening which prevent individuals from being able to work for at least 12 months. Social Security's proactive efforts to "fast track" certain conditions will help to reduce the backlog of disability claims and, more importantly, ensure those claims that fall under this initiative will be decided within days instead of months or years.

Currently, many people with younger-onset Alzheimer's or other dementias face multiple challenges when applying for Social Security Disability benefits (SSDI), including a long decision process and multiple appeals. If the SSA decides to include Alzheimer's disease on the list of "Compassionate Allowances" conditions, it would simplify and streamline the SSDI application process and decrease the wait time for benefits. It would also ensure individuals with younger-onset Alzheimer's and related dementias would not have to endure the associated unnecessary, emotionally and financially draining effects of having to wait an extended period of time for a disability determination.

"The very diagnosis of Alzheimer's indicates significant enough cognitive impairment to interfere with daily living activities, including the ability to work," says Johns.

The Alzheimer's Association believes today's Social Security hearing is a significant step in considering individuals with younger-onset Alzheimer's and related dementias for the Compassionate Allowance list. It provides an opportunity for individuals with Alzheimer's to testify and share their personal experience navigating the Social Security disability process before Social Security officials. The Alzheimer's Association remains committed to working with the agency to ensure the needs of individuals with dementia related illnesses continue to be considered and included.

Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's. For more information, visit www.alz.org.