



CONTACTS: Niles Frantz, Alzheimer's Association (U.S.), niles.frantz@alz.org, 312-335-5777
Theresa Lee, Alzheimer's Disease Association (Singapore), alzheimers.tp@pacific.net.sg, (65) 63538734

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE INTERNATIONAL AND FONDATION MEDERIC ALZHEIMER PRESENT FIRST GLOBAL AWARD FOR ALZHEIMER'S PSYCHOSOCIAL RESEARCH

March 27, 2009, London and Singapore – The first global awards for psychosocial research in Alzheimer's and dementia were presented today by Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) and the Fondation Mederic Alzheimer at a Gala Dinner at the 24th Conference of Alzheimer's Disease International, at the Suntec Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre, Singapore.

Mary Mittelman, Dr.P.H. of New York University received an award of 20,000€ for “the best evidence-based intervention for people with dementia and their carers” for work on the NYU Caregiver Intervention. Daniel George, M.Sc., a Ph.D. candidate in Medical Anthropology at Oxford University, England, received an award of 5,000€ for “the most promising evidence-based intervention for people with dementia and their carers” for research on whether intergenerational volunteering can enhance quality of life for persons with dementia.

The sponsors intend that the award be used for dissemination of the winners' research findings to a broad range of organizations and people involved in dementia treatment and care.

“Social and psychosocial research shows us many ways to improve the lives of people with dementia and their carers today and tomorrow,” said Marc Wortmann, ADI's Executive Director. “We feel the results of these studies deserve more attention, so that they will be more strongly supported and more broadly used in health services and community care. On behalf of ADI, I am very happy to have a part in launching this award for the first time.”

“Rigorous evaluation programs are needed to scientifically validate interventions for people with Alzheimer's and their carers, in order to recognise them as effective treatments, and to disseminate their results and methods to the largest number of organisations and carers around the world,” said Michele Fremontier, Director, Fondation Mederic Alzheimer. “Our goal with this award is to encourage research teams and practitioners to work on these topics hand in hand.”

Dr. Mittelman's Research

The NYU Caregiver Intervention (NYUCI) was designed to improve dementia caregiving skills, mobilize the support of naturally existing family networks, and provide the opportunity for counseling as needed over the entire course of caregiving. The project is unique in that it has followed Alzheimer's caregivers for the duration of the illness and assessed the impact of the intervention on caregivers over many years, through all the stages of Alzheimer's.

Spouse caregivers were enrolled in a randomized controlled trial of the multi-component intervention. The treatment group (a) received six sessions of individual and family counseling within a four month period, (b) agreed to join support groups, and (c) could contact a counselor for additional help and support for the entire course of the illness. The control group received the usual care offered to family members through the NYU Alzheimer's Disease Center.

According to Mittelman, the intervention made it possible to keep the person with dementia at home for more than a year and a half longer than those receiving usual care.

"Delaying placement was not accomplished at the expense of the caregiver's well-being," said Mittelman. "Caregivers in the treatment group were not only able to keep their spouses at home with them longer, but as a result of the intervention had greater tolerance for patient memory and behavior problems, improved satisfaction with the support provided by family and friends, and fewer symptoms of depression."

"Our results suggest that support and information alone are helpful, but generally not sufficient for family caregivers, who can benefit most from a multifaceted program that also includes individualized counseling for themselves and their family members," Mittelman added.

Mittelman proposed to the award committee to develop a dissemination plan for the NYUCI including an online implementation toolkit and a website to provide easy access to the tools and resources, serve as a central repository of information about caregiver support, and host online forums. According to the proposal, the NYUCI, if widely available, could have a major impact in reducing the emotional distress associated with caregiving, and perhaps on health, disability, and related healthcare utilization and costs.

Mr. George's Research

Mr. George and colleagues designed and implemented a small, randomized, controlled study to test the hypothesis that intergenerational volunteering would improve quality of life for persons with mild to moderate dementia by positively influencing five key variables: cognitive functioning, stress, depression, sense of purpose, and sense of usefulness.

Fifteen residents with dementia from an assisted living facility in Cleveland, Ohio were randomized into two groups: an intervention group of 8 persons who volunteered at The Intergenerational School (www.tisonline.org) once a week for 5 months, and a control group of 7 persons who participated in an educational seminar during the same interval. Over the time of the study, the intervention group showed a lower decline in cognitive functioning compared to the control group. In addition, a statistically significant decline in stress was observed in the intervention group, while an increase in stress was observed in the control group. Scores on sense of purpose and sense of usefulness were also comparatively higher in the intervention group.

The study suggested that intergenerational volunteering may promote an enhanced quality of life for persons with mild to moderate dementia, especially through decreased stress. The study also confirmed that older persons with dementia can still make contributions to their community.

Bio of Dr. Mittelman

Mary S. Mittelman, Dr.P.H. has been evaluating psychosocial interventions for family members of people with Alzheimer's for more than two decades. She is Director of the Psychosocial Research and Support Program at the Center of Excellence for Brain Aging and Dementia and Research Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at New York University Langone Medical Center, and leader of the Education and Psychosocial Cores of the NYU Alzheimer's Disease Center. She is Principal Investigator of the NYU-Spouse Caregiver Intervention study, which was funded by the NIH since 1987, as well as other studies of psychosocial interventions for people with cognitive impairment, dementia and their family

members. Mittelman received her Dr.P.H. in psychiatric epidemiology and an M.S. in biostatistics from Columbia University School of Public Health. With her colleagues, Mittelman has written several books for caregivers and professionals, including "Counseling the Alzheimer's caregiver, A resource for healthcare professionals" (Mittelman, Epstein and Pierzchala), published by AMA-Press, which documents the NYUCI in detail.

Bio of Mr. George

Daniel George earned his B.A. from The College of Wooster (OH) and his M.Sc. from Oxford. He is a research collaborator with Peter Whitehouse, M.D., Ph.D., at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, and is co-author with Dr. Whitehouse of the book "The Myth of Alzheimer's. What You Aren't Being Told About Today's Most Dreaded Diagnosis." Mr. George will be defending his doctoral thesis at Oxford in June 2009.

24th Conference of Alzheimer's Disease International

The 24th Conference of Alzheimer's Disease International will be held March 25-28, 2009, at the Suntec Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre, Suntec City, Singapore. "Dementia: Engaging Societies Around the World" is jointly organized by London-based Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) and Alzheimer's Disease Association, Singapore (ADA). For more information, please visit <http://www.adi2009.org/>

Alzheimer's Disease International

Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) is the international federation of 77 Alzheimer associations. It was founded in 1984 as a network for Alzheimer associations around the world to share and exchange information, resources and skills. ADI is based in London and is registered as a non-profit organization in the USA. ADI has been in official relations with the World Health Organization since 1996. Each member is the national Alzheimer association in their country who support people with dementia and their families. ADI's mission is to improve the quality of life of people with dementia and their families throughout the world.

Fondation Mederic Alzheimer

The Fondation Mederic Alzheimer (Paris) is a non-profit organization that was created in 1999. It aims to increase the knowledge in social sciences related to Alzheimer's disease, to support and promote innovative field projects intended to help people with Alzheimer's and their carers, and to instigate national surveys allowing the analysis of yearly evolutions and geographic disparities. The Fondation organises its support and research actions along three axes: (1) Observe, identify and understand, (2) Inspire, support and sustain and (3) Raise awareness and make available information and state of the art.

The common mission of Fondation Mederic Alzheimer and Alzheimer's Disease International is to improve the quality of life for people with dementia and their families.

###