

## Patient Advocacy Groups Welcome 40% Increase in Alzheimer's NIH Research Funds Authorized by Congress

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The U.S. Congress last week authorized an additional 40 percent in funds for Alzheimer's disease (AD) research, boosting the fiscal 2017 total by \$400 million to nearly \$1.4 billion as part of a \$2 billion year-over-year increase for the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The final package won praise from the nonprofit Global Alzheimer's Platform Foundation (GAP), a Washington-based entity launched in 2015 by UsAgainstAlzheimer's and the Global CEO Initiative (CEOi) on Alzheimer's Disease. GAP works with leading researchers, drug firms, nonprofit groups and governments to slash the time, cost and risk involved in Alzheimer's clinical trials and speed up approval of innovative medicines and other therapies.

The foundation aims to build a standing global clinical trial platform of willing participants through novel recruitment techniques, coupled with a network of participating high-performance clinical trial sites.

"Scientific research and the related clinical trials funded by the NIH are the only way we can find a cure for Alzheimer's disease," GAP Foundation President John Dwyer said in a press release. "A critical issue that delays scientific research is recruiting enough participants for clinical trials. This needed funding increase will help fill that void."

George Vradenburg, co-founder and chair of UsAgainstAlzheimer's, said the disease enacts a "destructive toll" on millions of American families.

"To defeat it, we need robust research funding that will yield a long-sought-after breakthrough. This funding increase is a positive step forward," Vradenburg said, noting that Alzheimer's costs U.S. families and taxpayers roughly \$259 billion a year. "Additional basic and clinical research funding is essential to achieve our national goal of a prevention and treatment by 2025."

The GAP Foundation said NIH spends more than 80 percent of its budget on 300,000 outside researchers investigating a wide variety of diseases. Some belong to the Global Alzheimer's Platform Foundation Network (GAP-Net) — a first-of-its-kind collaboration of 51 academic and private research institutions working to streamline the clinical research cycle for Alzheimer's therapies and bring them to market faster.

"The research being done today has put us closer than ever to promising discoveries in predictors of Alzheimer's," said Dr. Allan Levey, chair of the neurology department at Atlanta's Emory University School of Medicine. "This increase in funding will continue the momentum as we seek to find a cure for this devastating disease."

According to the Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's is the nation's sixth leading cause of death, killing more Americans than breast and prostate cancers combined. Alzheimer's deaths have jumped by 89 percent since 2000. Nearly 5.5 million Americans live with the disease, a number likely to triple to 16 million by 2050, when Alzheimer's will cost \$1.1 trillion a year. Some 200,000 Americans under 65 have early-onset Alzheimer's, and more than 15 million caregivers now provide an estimated 18.2 billion hours of unpaid Alzheimer's care worth \$230 billion each year.

Yet Alzheimer's is the only disease in the top 10 for which no treatment or cure exists. Despite its personal and financial toll, before last week's budget increase the NIH had been spending only \$450 million a year on Alzheimer's research — less than \$90 per person living with the disease.

Spearheading the bipartisan budget increase in Congress were Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Missouri) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Washington). In the House, the initiative received Rep. Tom Cole (R-Oklahoma) and Rep. Nita Lowey (D-New York).

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