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## Restaurateur B. Smith Urges More Funding for Alzheimer's Research

by [Candy Sagon](#) |

Former model and restaurateur B. Smith, who revealed last June that she had been **diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's** disease, urged senators on Wednesday to “make a difference” for the millions like her and approve **more funding for research** into the debilitating brain condition.

Smith, 65, testified before the Senate special committee on aging, ([view video excerpt](#)) along with medical and research experts from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Mayo Clinic and other centers.

Fighting back tears, Smith told the committee that the past eight months had been a tough time for her “because I’ve been so healthy for such a long time.”

“Lots of people out there probably are feeling the way I’m feeling, like this should never have happened to me,” she said.



But, she added, “I’m here because I don’t want anybody else to have to go through this.” She asked the committee “to make a difference not just for the 5 million Americans with Alzheimer’s and their caregivers, but for the future generations who will face this.”

The NIH currently invests \$586 million for Alzheimer’s research, compared to \$5 billion for cancer and \$2 billion for cardiovascular disease.

However, the cost to treat those with Alzheimer’s disease has soared to more than \$226 billion a year, including \$153 billion in costs to Medicare and Medicaid, with the total cost expected to rise to \$1 trillion by 2050. “Yet we are currently spending less than three tenths of one percent of that amount on Alzheimer’s research,” said Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, who chaired the hearing.

Richard Hodes, M.D., director of the National Institutes of Aging, said the NIH has requested another \$51 million for Alzheimer’s research in the president’s 2016 budget. The additional funds will be used to bolster research into including identifying new risk and protective genes; drug discovery and development; and trials of therapies for people at the highest risk of the disease.

<http://blog.aarp.org/2015/03/25/restaurateur-b-smith-urges-more-funding-for-alzheimers-research/>