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Why is Alzheimer's Different?

By David Bull - www.caregiver4caregivers.com

When I was first researching Alzheimer's after my mother was diagnosed one question I asked was ... Why is Alzheimer's different for families than, say, cancer? Unfortunately, Alzheimer's isn't 'Sexy' in today's research funding world. Breast Cancer and Child Leukemia, for example are more accepted as worthwhile causes for funding. They attract research funding much more easily (you can even add prostate cancer to the 'non-sexy' list). Funding is still needed to reduce the incidence of dementia and thus reduce the number of sufferers, and the resulting trauma of the caregivers, not to say the overall expense to the community. Until we solve these issues Alzheimer's will continue to be a growing concern.

Alzheimer's is a disease of mental function rather of physical body (such as cancer), therefore it can cause endless dysfunction in the family itself. Alzheimer's is extremely variable, as varied as people are, and this is not true of most diseases.

Alzheimer's asks of families that they learn new ways to make a successful relationship with the person who has the illness and that they become willing to let go of the past picture of who the sick person once was. This is why it is very important for all families to tackle the Alzheimer's problem together from the outset, if they can.

This of course does not detract from the fact that many families who have to deal with cancer don't end up in a caregiving role. I can definitely tell you that is not the case ... My own family and I have been both caregivers and patients of cancers.

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