

Testimony of Lihui Chen in support of the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program
Appropriations Committee
March 4, 2011

Alzheimer's Disease is a devastating illness that is on the rise as the generation of Baby Boomers are aging. Alzheimer's Disease is a "forgotten" disease, in the sense that those who are affected gradually lose their memory, and that it's largely unaddressed by the American public.

My grandma was an Alzheimer's patient. It was heart wrenching to watch her gradually losing her memory and becoming a stranger. At first she forgot simple things such as if she had taken her medications, then she gradually forgot more serious things such as where she lived. One time she went to the food market to buy groceries - the same food market that she had bought her groceries from for decades - she couldn't remember how to get home afterwards. It wasn't hours before a family friend bumped into her and brought her home. As time passed, her conditions got even worse. She was forgetting the people that she loved. She could not remember how many children she had, or even the names of her children. It took a toll on her relationship with the rest of the family.

Alzheimer's Disease tears families and friends apart. When other patients are coping with their illnesses, they gain strength and confidence knowing that their loved ones are supporting them, but Alzheimer's patients cannot even remember those who can provide the most comfort and love for them. They're alone.

Currently, more than 5 million people in the U.S. have Alzheimer's, and it is the 6th leading cause of death in the U.S. While other major diseases are seeing decreases in death rate in recent years, death rates due to Alzheimer's are on the rise. Part of the reason is that Alzheimer's researches are underfunded. Compared to other major diseases, Alzheimer's researches are only receiving a small percentage in funding from the National Health Institute. ¹

Alzheimer's Disease is a crippling disease that no one should ever have to experience. With more research, Alzheimer's can become a disease of the past. In the meantime, programs such as the Alzheimer's Respite program allow the individual to remain in the community with care and supports, and greatly improves the quality of life for the individual and their families.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

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¹ Alzheimer's Association "Boomer Report" <http://www.alz.org/boomers/> (4 Jan. 2011)