Death Count Continues to Grow in Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Communities, Alzheimer’s Association Calls for Action

Alzheimer’s Association releases new policy guidance to address COVID-19 crisis in long-term and community-based care settings

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 11, 2020 — The Alzheimer’s Association is sounding the alarm and releasing important guidance today urging policymakers to implement new policy solutions to address the dramatic and evolving issues impacting nursing homes and assisted living communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Across the country more than 2 million people live in long-term and residential care communities. These residents, their family members and staff are in crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented great challenges including the inability to access necessary testing and resources, inaccurate reporting and more. According to some estimates, more than 27,000 residents and workers have died from the coronavirus at nursing homes and other long-term care communities. The virus so far has infected more than 150,000 at some 7,700 facilities.

“Nursing homes and assisted living communities are on the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic, yet as a nation we have not done nearly enough,” said Harry Johns, Alzheimer’s Association president and CEO. “We now know how disruptive, widespread, and deadly the impact of this pandemic is on such residents and staff. It is essential that as a nation we provide the same necessary response and resources provided for hospitals and for acute care settings for those in long-term care.”

COVID-19 continues to threaten the health of millions of Americans. Individuals living in care communities, who are often the most frail and vulnerable, are facing additional challenges. Residents often live in close proximity, a large majority are older and have underlying chronic conditions that put them at higher risk for COVID-19.

Nationwide, there are more than 15,000 nursing homes and more than 28,000 assisted living communities. According to the Alzheimer’s Association 2020 Alzheimer’s Disease Facts and Figures report, 48% percent of nursing home residents are living with Alzheimer’s or other dementias. Among older adults in residential facilities, including assisted living, 42% or more have some form of Alzheimer’s or other dementias. In addition, many individuals with Alzheimer’s or other dementias receive community-based services, including 32% of individuals using home health services and 31% using adult day services.

“Given all that is now known, the national response to this still developing crisis needs to be swift, effective and coordinated across federal, state and local governments so that we support all long-term care communities,” said Johns.

The guidance provides policy solutions to:

- enhance testing in long-term care community settings
- implement necessary reporting
● develop protocols to respond to a rise in cases
● ensure all facilities have the necessary equipment (i.e. PPE)

“The nature of the pandemic and the need to implement appropriate social distancing has been hard for everyone, especially for families who have been unable to visit their loved ones in nursing homes and assisted living facilities,” said Johns. “Implementing these policy proposals will protect this vulnerable population, more quickly reunite them with family members and safeguard the professionals dedicated to caring for them every day.”

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Alzheimer’s Association®
The Alzheimer’s Association leads the way to end Alzheimer’s and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer’s and all other dementia.™ For more information, visit alz.org or call the 24/7 Helpline at 800.272.3900.

Alzheimer’s Impact Movement
The Alzheimer’s Impact Movement (AIM) is a separately incorporated advocacy affiliate of the Alzheimer’s Association. AIM works to develop and advance policies to overcome Alzheimer’s disease through increased investment in research, enhanced care and improved support. For more information, visit alzimpact.org.