

The Social and Economic Burden of Alzheimer's Disease on Family Households

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INTRODUCTION & AIM

Alzheimer's disease represents an escalating global crisis that extends far beyond the boundaries of public healthcare systems, placing its heaviest weight directly on family units who assume primary caregiving responsibilities. According to the World Health Organization, based on 2021 estimates, the disease affects over 57 million people worldwide, and annual global economic costs were evaluated in 2019 at 1.3 trillion dollars. Beyond the medical and neurological implications, the progression of this disease generates profound structural and economic pressures that completely reshape everyday household dynamics and threaten long-term financial stability. In response to these systemic challenges, the primary purpose of this study is to explore and map the multi-dimensional social and economic burdens experienced by families caring for individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Through this focus, the research seeks to differentiate between tangible expenditures and hidden costs, while explicitly analyzing how informal caregiving disrupts personal employment trajectories and worsens vulnerabilities across various income levels.

METHOD

This research adopts a specialized socio-analytical framework that relies on the rigorous examination of secondary data and a systematic review of the existing medical, sociological, and economic literature. By synthesizing quantitative economic indicators with qualitative social data, the study evaluates how macro-level institutional gaps translate into micro-level family crises. This specific methodological approach allows the phenomenon to be analyzed not as an isolated clinical event, but within the broader, critical context of sustainable social protection systems and contemporary family structures in rapidly aging societies.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The financial and social toll of Alzheimer's disease on the household is divided into compounding direct and indirect categories that drastically drain family resources. Direct costs represent immediate, tangible financial outflows, which include continuous expenses for medical treatments, diagnostics, ongoing medication, and specialized services like home modifications or professional nursing care. Conversely, indirect costs constitute the hidden economic damage, characterized primarily by the substantial loss of income when family members are forced to reduce their working hours or exit the workforce entirely to provide unpaid care. The discussion of these findings highlights a profound gender disparity within the household, as informal caregiving responsibilities fall disproportionately on women, significantly disrupting their long-term career progression and financial independence. Because public institutional support is often insufficient or inaccessible, families are forced to absorb these immense financial and emotional shocks entirely on their own. This heavy reliance on internal family resources increases systemic vulnerability, pushing middle- and low-income households toward severe economic marginalization as they deplete life savings to maintain basic care, thereby preventing intergenerational wealth transfer.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that Alzheimer's disease can no longer be treated solely as an individual medical condition, but must be recognized as a complex social issue requiring integrated public policy responses. The current societal model, which relies on the family as the default healthcare provider, is fundamentally unsustainable and actively drives long-term social inequality and financial marginalization in aging populations. To mitigate this growing crisis, sustainable social protection systems must prioritize the expansion of community-based services like day-care and respite care, implement targeted financial assistance programs to offset out-of-pocket medical expenses, and establish formal caregiver support mechanisms that combine psychological counseling with flexible labor protections to safeguard employment trajectories.

FUTURE WORK / REFERENCES

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