



ALZHEIMER'S FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

Our mission is "to provide optimal care and services to individuals confronting dementia, and to their caregivers and families—through member organizations dedicated to improving quality of life."

Written Statement for the Congressional Record

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Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights
"Global Strategies to Combat the Devastating Health and
Economic Impacts of Alzheimer's Disease"**

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Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Payne, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for convening this hearing and for inviting the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) to testify. I am Eric J. Hall, AFA's founding President and Chief Executive Officer, and I am honored to be here today.

My involvement in this cause is not simply a career endeavor and it is more than my family history—as if that would not be enough—but it is a painful result of the many stories I hear from struggling families across our country. I need to do something, we need to do something—and I beg you to make the most of the present opportunity and make it happen now.

AFA was formed in February 2002 "to provide optimal care and services to individuals confronting dementia, and to their caregivers and families—through member organizations dedicated to improving quality of life." Today, our membership consists of more than 1,600 organizations across the country. Our services include a toll-free hotline staffed by licensed social workers; *care ADvantage*, a free quarterly magazine for caregivers that reaches 1 million readers; professional training programs; AFA Teens support and scholarship program; National Memory Screening Day; and grants to service organizations as well as respite grants to families in need.

The Alzheimer's Foundation International (AFI) was founded in 2009, and is expanding worldwide by forming member organizations in various countries. AFI is an outgrowth of the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA), and its member organizations include AFA; Alzheimer's Foundation for Caregiving in Canada; and Alzheimer's Foundation of Israel. I serve as the president and CEO of the Alzheimer's Foundation International.

AFI is working toward collaboratively setting a paradigm of quality care for individuals with the disease and their families by raising awareness of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, providing education, and establishing programs and services that can be replicated in countries around the globe.

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AFI's goals include: advocating to make Alzheimer's disease and related dementias a national priority in a country; working in partnership to advance this disease state as a global health crisis that requires worldwide attention; promoting public awareness and understanding of Alzheimer's disease and related illnesses; improving quality of life for individuals with dementia and their families; and raising the bar on dementia care, provided by informal and formal caregivers.

Accomplishing these goals include: educating families and professionals about diagnosis, treatment and care, including the importance of early detection; providing education, social services and community resources for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, their caregivers and families; advancing programs and services that meet the educational, emotional, financial, practical and social needs of individuals with dementia and their families; providing education and training, and promoting best practices for healthcare professionals; and minimizing informal and formal social care and medical costs on families.

The National Alzheimer's Project Act passed by Congress last year was a groundbreaking first step toward the creation of a National Alzheimer's Disease Plan in the United States. However, it's no secret that the U.S. is behind the curve of several other countries that already have National Alzheimer's Disease Plans in place or in process. We have a lot of homework to do but we can learn a lot from what has already been done overseas—both in planning and in political commitment.

The next crucial step is for an international meeting of those countries by the first quarter of 2012. AFA would be honored to serve as an NGO supporting partner in such an effort and would be glad to work with ADI and others. AFA applauds ADI for its financial support of the 10/66 Dementia Research Group and its commitment to international collaboration.

In AFA's view, the international meeting would ideally consolidate how other countries have approached their plans and would produce a compendium with common threads. Such a meeting would help us develop our plan and help us begin to develop a global approach to this pandemic. The meeting would also include a day or more of panel discussions on established policies as well as innovative care programs abroad as well as those in the U.S., of which there are many. There is little doubt we can get there faster by reviewing what has already been done, what has been successful, and what to avoid.

One example that the U.S. can learn from is the award-winning dementia care available in Israel through Melabev. Melabev is the founding member of the Alzheimer's Foundation of Israel and together they share a combined commitment to serve the Alzheimer's population in Israel. The Alzheimer's Foundation of Israel is a nonprofit organization founded in January 2011 by the Alzheimer's Foundation International (AFI)—an outgrowth of the Alzheimer's Foundation of America.

Melabev has spent the past 30 years developing therapeutic activities that restore the dignity and joy of men and women who suffer from the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. Its mission is to help elders function at their maximum ability. Melabev does not look at what these older adults have lost but instead focuses on how to bring out and strengthen the incredible person that is inside each of them.

The Melabev network of centers gives people with dementia and Alzheimer's disease a reason to get up in the morning. Melabev Memory Clubs offer memory exercises, stimulating cognitive activities and word games in a friendly social environment for the mild memory and cognitively impaired. Memory Clubs are sub-divided by language: English, Hebrew and Russian (especially for those who forget and revert to their mother tongue). Other Melabev day care centers are multi-lingual. The empathic professional staff conducts a range of innovative age-appropriate, dignified activities for people with Alzheimer's symptoms, such as: dance, art, music gardening, pet therapy, and mental stimulation with computers.

A Melabev team of multi-professionals brings Melabev services and activities right into the family home. Each individual with dementia is given a geriatric assessment and a range of healthcare professionals are available for working with the individual and the family members under their roof.

Not only does Melabev care for the person with dementia, but also for the family caregivers to help cope with their burden of care. This is done through support groups and family meetings with the social workers from the day care centers or home care. Melabev also believes that giving the family knowledge empowers them in their task so they provide a library and resource center, Web site, and lectures with the latest updated information on care of people with dementia.

It provides palliative care for individuals in the end stages of the disease as well as guidance on end of life issues for the whole family. In between regularly scheduled house calls the members of team are accessible by phone whenever needed. Melabev gives families a shoulder to lean on. No other organization in Israel provides home care or home hospice care that is specific to the needs of individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and their families. The Home Hospice program—and related end-of-life courses in the Institute for the Study of Aging—are funded by the UJA-Federation of New York.

The Institute of Studies on Aging at Shaare Zedek offers courses, seminars and workshops for in-service training that are accredited by the Ministries of Health, Education and Social Welfare. Professionals who work with the elderly, such as nurses, social workers and therapists, come from all over the country to attend. The Institute keeps them updated on the latest findings in the field. There are courses on Alzheimer's disease and dementia and specialized therapies for working with the elderly such as art therapy. The Institute has educated a generation of geriatric professionals.

Israel also has groundbreaking geriatric programs at Herzog Hospital in Jerusalem, whose motto is "Restoring dignity for all." Herzog Hospital is currently the only facility in Israel to combine neurological, behavioral and social approaches in treating the full range of geriatric illnesses—including Alzheimer's disease. Its Center for Neurobehavioral and Neurogeriatric Disorders integrates clinical, research and public education activities in geriatric neurology, psychology, and psychiatry. The In-Patient Division includes a neurobehavioral and psycho-geriatric unit; rehabilitation; a 24-hour hotline, including real-time emergency response; and family and social services that offer family therapy, home visits, support groups and individual consultation. Most uniquely, Herzog also has a specialized emergency room for behavioral and psychiatric issues; and all staff persons—from physicians to social workers—are trained in geriatric approaches to care.

Melabev and Herzog hospital in Israel are just two examples of the many innovative programs available throughout the world. A Congressional call for an international meeting is how we'll learn more. And if we do things right, an international movement will follow.

I'm going to end with a quote from Peter Drucker, a writer who was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, in 2002. He said, "Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes; but no plans." AFA looks forward to working with Members of the Subcommittee to address the important issues raised in today's hearing. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I would be glad to answer any questions.