

## Failure to Seek Medical Advice For Early Symptoms of Alzheimer’s Disease Results in Delayed Diagnosis and Treatment Which is Often Regretted Later

*Survey of caregivers shows that denial and belief that early symptoms are “normal signs of aging” are major barriers to seeking medical advice.*

A Harris Interactive survey of 500 family caregivers of Alzheimer’s disease patients found that there is often a long delay between the time when the first signs of symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease occur and when the patients, or family members, seek medical advice. For most caregivers, the appearance of symptoms is not enough for them to believe that something is definitely wrong with the person for whom they provide care.

Because the early signs of Alzheimer’s disease often go unrecognized or are dismissed as normal signs of aging, many months or even years can pass before a physician’s advice is sought. On average, caregivers report that more than a year (mean = 12.8 months) passed between the appearance of the first signs of symptoms of the disease and when a physician was first consulted.

Among caregivers who say that at least six months had passed between the first signs or symptoms or a specific incident and consulting a physician, 57% say a physician was not consulted sooner because they believed what they were observing were the normal signs of aging. Thirty-one percent report that a physician was not consulted sooner because of denial.

Many caregivers come to regret their failure to recognize early symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease or to seek medical advice. Many caregivers say that they would have sought medical advice earlier if they had known that medication was available. Almost all caregivers say they would advise others who suspect Alzheimer’s disease to take action, or to seek a diagnosis, quickly.

### FIGURE 1

Base: All care-givers

Average time after first signs or symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease and before physician was consulted	12.8 months
Believe “it would have been better had a doctor been consulted sooner after the first symptoms appeared”	41%
Was not aware that any prescription medications for the treatment of Alzheimer’s disease existed at the time a physician was consulted	68%
Say that a physician would have been consulted sooner had they or others known that prescription medications were available to treat Alzheimer’s disease	47%
Would advise someone who suspects Alzheimer’s disease in themselves or loved one to take action or seek diagnosis quickly	96%
Believe that diagnosis of Alzheimer’s during the early stages of the disease is:	
Very beneficial	62%
Somewhat beneficial	20%

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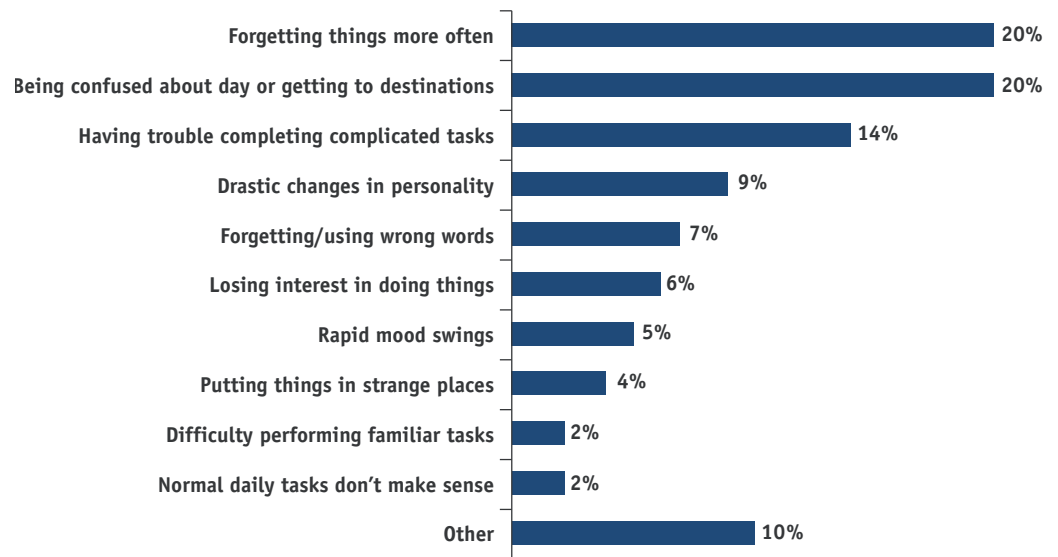
Most family caregivers are women, and their average age is 48. Male caregivers tend to be about a decade older. The majority of caregivers is living with the person for whom they provide care and, on average, has been providing care for that person for close to four years. Two out of three caregivers are providing care to a parent or the parent of a spouse.

The three symptoms most commonly reported as the first to appear are forgetting things more often, like names or phone numbers, being confused about what day it is or how to get home, and having trouble completing complicated tasks. Spouses were significantly more likely than other caregivers to be the first to notice symptoms.

The Alzheimer’s disease symptoms most frequently noted as the first indications that something might be wrong include forgetting things more often, like names or phone numbers (20%), being confused about what day it is or how to get home (20%), and having trouble completing complicated tasks (14%). Spouses are particularly likely to report problems associated with completing complicated tasks.

**FIGURE 2**

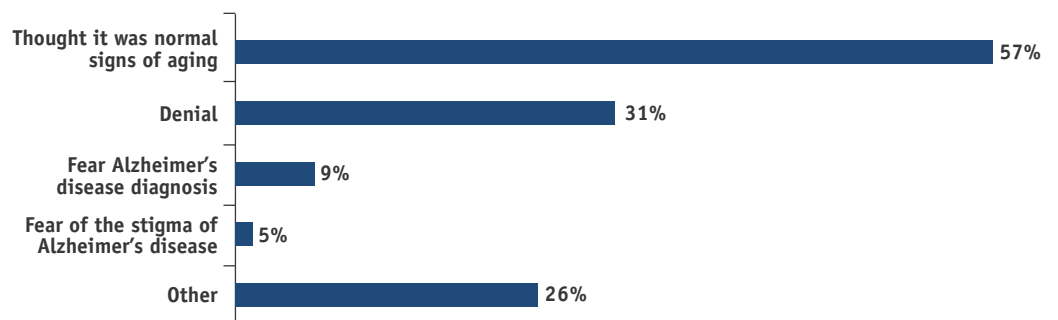
First Signs or Symptoms Noticed



**FIGURE 3**

Reasons Physician Not Consulted Earlier

Base: Did not consult physician in first six months after symptoms



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This research was commissioned by Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation in conjunction with the National Family Care-givers Association (NFCA), conducted by Harris Interactive. The interviews with the 500 caregivers were conducted over the Internet in July 2001. Respondents were selected from Harris Interactive's panel of respondents who have agreed to complete surveys online and who reported that they provided care to someone with Alzheimer's disease for which they were not paid.

## About Harris Interactive<sup>SM</sup>

Harris Interactive (Nasdaq: HPOL) is a worldwide market research and consulting firm, best known for *The Harris Poll*<sup>®</sup> and its pioneering use of the Internet to conduct scientifically accurate market research. Strengthened by its recent merger with Total Research Corporation, the Company now combines the power of technology with international expertise in predictive, custom, strategic research. Headquartered in the United States, with offices in the United Kingdom, Japan and a global network of local market and opinion research firms, the Company conducts international research with fluency in multiple languages. For more information about Harris Interactive, visit [www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com). EOE M/F/D/V

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