



New Annual Wellness Visits for Medicare Beneficiaries to Include Detection of Cognitive Impairment

WASHINGTON, Nov. 4, 2010 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Yesterday, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services issued final regulations for implementation of an important provision of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which will include for the first time an annual wellness benefit for all Medicare beneficiaries beginning January 2011. This Medicare preventive service benefit is significant for the growing number of baby boomers who will soon be reaching the age of Medicare eligibility. It is also particularly important to the Alzheimer's Association and the more than 5 million Americans it represents because an assessment for the detection of cognitive impairment will be a mandatory part of this annual wellness visit.

As the first wave of baby boomers begin turning 65 next year and advance into an age of greater risk for developing Alzheimer's and other dementias, the inclusion of cognitive impairment detection is essential. Medicare currently covers and pays for diagnostic evaluations. However, if cognitive impairment is not detected initially, the important diagnostic process won't take place. In order to provide better medical care and outcomes for individuals with Alzheimer's and other dementias, first and foremost, possible dementia must be detected, followed by diagnosis and notation in a patient's medical record.

"As the leading research, advocacy, and support organization for Alzheimer's disease, the Alzheimer's Association applauds the inclusion of detection of cognitive impairment as a part of the Annual Wellness Visit for all older Americans," says Harry Johns, President and CEO of the Alzheimer's Association. "The Association has advocated for this development and believes this effort will provide significant assistance to the millions of Americans who have undiagnosed cognitive impairment and provide access to important medical care and services that will be central to improving lives."

The Alzheimer's Association has been a strong supporter of efforts to increase early detection of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. The Association will support physicians and other health care providers in order to facilitate better health outcomes for millions of Americans.

Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's. For more information, visit www.alz.org.

SOURCE Alzheimer's Association.

See the Screen, Inc. [Cognitive Testing](#) topic for related information.