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## Geographical Variation in Dementia: Higher Risk for Rural and Early Life Rural Residents

According to researchers in Scotland, new evidence indicates that those who live in rural areas, and particularly those who are “early life” rural residents, may be at increased risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease or another form of dementia as compared to their urban counterparts. The study reviewed data from 35 unique studies of geographically-related risks for Alzheimer’s disease and dementia and found a number of environmental factors associated with increased risk including climate, diet, toxins, and infection. Those who moved to a rural area later in life were less likely to be affected, which further suggests a strong association between rural living and risk factors for dementia. This work may help identify potentially modifiable risk factors for dementia in rural areas. ◆

**Citation:** *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 2012, 41:1012-1032.

### Did you know?

- Every 70 seconds, someone in America develops Alzheimer’s disease. It is the most common type of dementia, a syndrome which affects memory, behavior, and the ability to perform daily activities.
- More than 5 million Americans live with Alzheimer’s disease; it is the 6th leading cause of death in the United States.
- 1 in 3 seniors dies with Alzheimer’s disease or another form of dementia.
- Alzheimer’s disease is the only cause of death among the top 10 in America without a means of prevention, cure, or a way to slow its progression.
- Nearly 15% of caregivers for those with Alzheimer’s are long-distance caregivers, especially in rural areas.
- In 2012, over 15 million Alzheimer’s caregivers provided over 17 billion hours of unpaid care valued at \$216 billion.
- In 2013, the direct cost of care for those with Alzheimer’s will total over \$200 billion. Caregivers of those with Alzheimer’s have also incurred an additional \$9 billion in health care costs of their own due to the physical and emotional toll of caregiving. ◆



**Citation:** [http://www.alz.org/alzheimers\\_disease\\_facts\\_and\\_figures.asp](http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_facts_and_figures.asp)

## VA Meets Executive Order Goal to Hire Over 800 Additional Mental Health Professionals

The VA recently met a department goal established by a 2012 Executive Order calling for 1,600 additional mental health professionals to be hired. As of November 2013, the VA has hired 815 new Peer Specialists and Peer Support Apprentices, all of whom are Veterans and have successfully managed their own mental health recovery for at least one year. Peer Specialists are trained and certified, and Peer Support Apprentices undergo additional training to become Specialists. These mental health professionals have been placed in every VA Medical Center and every CBOC with over 10,000 enrollees. Additionally, the VA has announced a 50% increase in staffing for the Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-TALK), which is credited with helping more than 26,000 actively suicidal Veterans. Finally, the VA has also held over 150 Mental Health Summits this year at VA Medical Centers around the country. These summits are designed to engage health care providers, Veterans Service Organizations, and community partners to address the variety of mental health needs of Veterans. The VA cares for over 6.3 million Veterans each year, and these programs put focus on increasing access and quality of care for the rising number of Veterans with mental health care needs. ◆

