

First Drug Approved For Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's Disease (AD) brings cruel catastrophe to both its victims and their caregivers. It robs its victims of their memory, physical control and finally their lives, while their caregivers suffer from anxiety and increasingly stressful demands on their time and energy. Since AD was first described in 1907, there has been no treatment to alleviate its devastating effects. Now, after extensive testing in animals, human clinical trials have shown that a new drug called tacrine can alleviate AD's symptoms.

Approximately 4 million Americans suffer from AD, most of whom are over 65, and as many as 50% of those 85 and older suffer from the disease. AD results in

about 100,000 deaths each year, thus representing the fourth most common cause of death in adults, after heart disease, cancer and stroke. In this age of heightened awareness of the economic costs of health care, it is important to note that the treatment costs alone total \$90 billion per year. Victims of AD suffer progressive impairment of the mind and then the body, ending with seizures and death as many as fifteen years after first being diagnosed. Devastating economically, emotionally and physically, its cause unknown, AD had until now challenged medical science and won on all counts.

The first significant breach in the wall has now appeared. With

years of testing in fish, mice, rats, guinea pigs, rabbits, dogs, and baboons, medical researchers regarded tacrine, a drug known for thirty years, to have extraordinary promise to become the first drug effective against AD. Due to the notoriously uneven nature of the symptoms of AD, and the difficulty in measuring symptoms like loss of attention, it took years of carefully controlled trials to show that tacrine's effect was real and was not due to the placebo effect or "wishful thinking" on the part of caregivers or physicians. Finally, the Food and Drug Administration was convinced and approved tacrine for alleviating the symptoms of patients suffering from mild to moderate stages of AD.

Side effects, which include altered liver function, are usually mild and reversible.

Tacrine is by no means a cure, and cannot help all patients. In addition, tacrine has not been shown to slow the progression of the disease. Yet to the victims of AD and to their loved ones, the relief that tacrine can bring is certainly welcome. And the promise of better drugs to come, symbolized by tacrine, is good news indeed.

Medical Milestone is provided as a public service by Americans for Medical Progress Educational Foundation. For information about its medical programs or to subscribe to its bimonthly bulletin, Breakthrough, reporting on medical discoveries, cures and treatments, write AMPEF at Crystal Square Three, 1735 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 907, Arlington, VA 22202; or call (703) 412-1111.

Help For Alzheimer's Caregivers

Four million Americans, one in 10 over 65 and one in three over 80, are stricken with Alzheimer's disease, a progressive neurological illness affecting memory and reason. It is the fourth leading cause of death among American adults. Patient care alone costs some \$80-\$90 billion annually. But the devastation of this disease extends far beyond patients and medical fees. The Alzheimer caregiver is often the "other victim" of Alzheimer's.

To help caregivers understand the complexities of Alzheimer's disease and to prepare them for the progression of the disease and how to make essential choices for daily care, the Long Island Alzheimer's Foundation (LIAF) has developed "Living with Alzheimer's," a comprehensive three-part video series. Highlights of the series include:

• Part One. "Understanding Alzheimer's" features experienced caregivers and experts who discuss the disease what to expect and the importance of long-term planning.

• Part Two. "Choices in Caregiving" shows the caregiver how to seek help, deal with the anxieties of family and friends and prepare the home for the Alzheimer's sufferer.

• Part Three. "Challenges of Caregiving" presents the thoughts of caregivers about handling the guilt, denial, self-neglect and depression that frequently accompany their seemingly thankless roles.

According to Janet Walsh, LIAF board chairman, "the videotapes, which run approximately 35 minutes each, are ideal for use by support group leaders, health care professionals and family members dealing with Alzheimer's sufferers."

To find out where you can view the series in your community or purchase a copy for yourself or a loved one, call 1-800-399-2244. "Living with Alzheimer's" is funded by a grant from Hoechst-Roussel Pharmaceuticals, Inc. with additional support from the Grumman Corporation.

Learn To Profit From A Few Acres

NEWARK, Del. — A niche market and a little land can add up to extra income for people who like to grow flowers and herbs. Profiting From A Few Acres is a two-evening workshop on the basics of starting this kind of home-grown enterprise. Business topics include zoning and land use, market surveys and financing.

Overviews on production of wildflower and groundcover sod, herb products and cut flowers will be presented as well.

The course will be held on February 1 and 3, from 7 to 9:30 p.m. at the New Castle County Extension office, Room 032 Townsend Hall, Newark. The office is located on the College of

Agriculture grounds on South College Avenue, across from the Chrysler plant.

A fee of \$15 includes workshop materials. Call New Castle County Extension at (302) 831-2506 for a registration form. Seating is limited, and last year's workshop sold out, so early registration is advised.



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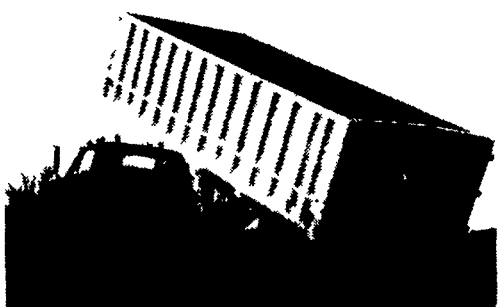
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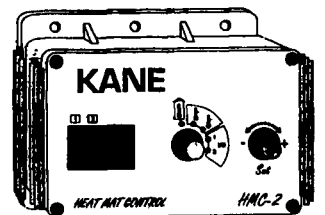
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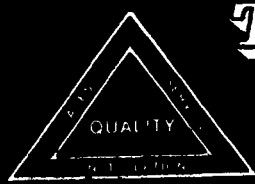
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