

HOUSECALL

YOUR GUIDE TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS

March 2012



Staying energized

Healthy alternatives can give you a boost and be beneficial to the body

Inside: High stress levels can take severe turns

HOUSE CALL

YOUR GUIDE TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS

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CHILDREN'S HEALTH



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High stress
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take a
severe turn.

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Geoff Speed, manager of Golden Carrot Natural Foods in Paducah, discusses the benefits of several natural energy alternatives to highly caffeinated and sugary drinks. Ingredients like Royal Jelly contain all B-complex vitamins that help produce healthy energy.

WILL PINKSTON | The Sun

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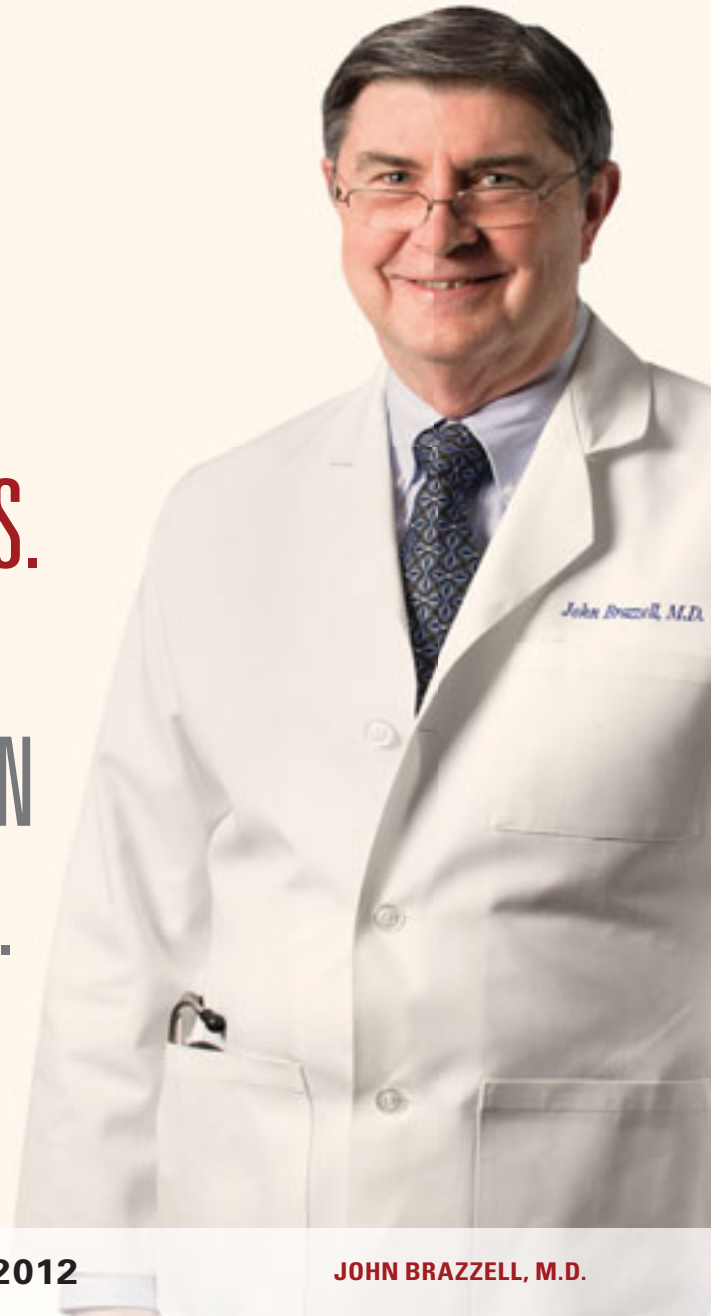
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House Call is dedicated to providing our readers with helpful health related information. We strive to help answer the questions of current and ongoing concerns. This publication is not intended to take the place of medical experts, but rather inspire our readers to take an active role in their physical and mental well being.



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Cover Story

Natural, healthy ways to keep you going

BY WILL PINKSTON

wpinkston@paducahsun.com

Sugary, caffeinated beverages keep the working world revolving it seems, though healthier alternatives not only provide the same kick, but pay-offs that benefit your entire system.

We've all fallen prey to the end-of-the-work-day slump, resorting to a final cup of coffee, soda or energy supplement to push through until the closing bell, though the level of additives in such beverages can become quite a concern when making frequent trips back to the vending machine, said Renee Waggoner, a registered dietitian.

"With small amounts of coffee, tea and a soda occasionally there's nothing wrong with that, just not a six pack of sodas a day," Waggoner said. "Everything in moderation."

And that moderation is absolutely key when dealing with overly caffeinated and sugary drinks. Excessive sugar fools your body into thinking you're not hungry, preventing you from consuming healthier foods and excessive caffeine can play havoc on your heart beat, Waggoner said.

"If your heart is in good shape and doing well, you'll be fine, but over time it could cause some issues," she said.

Those symptoms can be exacerbated when dealing with the colorful energy drinks lining the coolers at your local gas station. According to the USDA, the caffeine content of a single serving of an energy drink (about a third of a can) can range from 72 to 150 mg. Over-consumption of caffeine, above 400 mg a day can induce nervousness, irritability, sleeplessness, arrhythmia, increased blood pressure and upset stomach.

Though even more surprising than caffeine levels are the high levels of sugars and sodium contained within an energy drink, said Geoff Speed, manager of Golden Carrot Natural Foods in Paducah. Just one serving



Geoff Speed, manager of Golden Carrot Natural Foods in Paducah, discusses the benefits of several natural energy alternatives to highly caffeinated and sugary drinks. Ingredients like Royal Jelly contain all B-complex vitamins that help produce healthy energy.

WILL PINKSTON | The Sun

of a popular energy drink contained 53 g of sugar and nearly 360 mg of sodium.

"Sugars completely deplete the body of B vitamins, so (energy drinks) try to include B vitamins into the drink so it will counteract all the negative effects it's doing to the body," Speed said.

Replacing such drinks can be hard due to the ease with which people can buy the products and feel the boost in energy, but Speed said there are healthier alternatives that don't even include sugar, but still produce that noticeable spike.

The natural product, whey protein, can be taken with a glass of water and has similar payoff to an energy

drink. Containing no sugars, less than 5 mg cholesterol and less than 1 mg carbohydrates, whey protein provides the body with protein that can be converted to energy.

Other natural ingredients, many made from the common bee, can also produce the desired effect without the health concerns. Royal Jelly contains all B-Complex vitamins, a rich source of proteins containing eight essential amino acids and nutrients. Ginseng supplies nutrition to the body to use hormones and stimulates the central nervous system.

"Basically what you're doing here, you're eliminating all your caffeine and you're eliminating all your added, refined sugars and stimu-

lants, to allow your body to just use the naturally occurring B vitamins," Speed said.

"I know how good I do off sugar and it makes a huge, noticeable difference in your life."

Waggoner suggested returning to a healthier diet of fruits and proteins, while also making sure you stay hydrated with water.

"Water is the best thing for you and if you don't like the taste, add a little lemon or lime juice to it," she said. "There's nothing wrong with adding Crystal Light, just use it in moderation."

Call Will Pinkston, a Sun staff writer, at 270-575-8676.

High stress levels can take severe turns

BY WILL PINKSTON

wpinkston@paducahsun.com

It's something that everyone deals with on a daily basis to some extent, but for students, high stress levels can result in a litany of further issues.

Most recently, a breakout of uncontrollable twitching and tics swept across a small New York community in October, affecting teenage girls and one teenage boy of the same school, as well as a 34-year old woman.

Doctors remain perplexed over the exact cause of the tics — not directly pinpointing an exact medical malady — but instead attribute the condition to conversion disorder.

According to the A.D.A.M. Medical Encyclopedia, conversion disorder manifests itself in multiple neurological symptoms that cannot be explained by medical means. Symptoms tend to be triggered by psychological conflict or stress-induced, leaving doctors to analyze any stressful situations the 15 teens might have experienced, said Dr. Jennifer McVige, a pediatric neurologist who has examined 10 of the students.

"All of the kids had something big that happened," such as divorcing parents or other upsetting circumstances, McVige told the Associated Press.

Although local schools haven't witnessed the extreme circumstances of conversion disorder sprouting in their student population, the tell-tale signs of stress and anxiety aren't often times very clear to recognize, said Amy Smith, Paducah Tilghman High School nurse.

"I see symptoms of what could be stress and anxiety — frequent headaches and stomach aches — not that it can really be pinpointed to stress, but if it's not anything else then that tends to be the conclusion we reach," Smith said.

On average, Smith said about 50 students approach her through the

course of a day, expressing symptoms of high anxiety or stress levels. However, many students tend to keep their concerns to themselves, shying away from help.

Symptoms of stress in a teen may take different forms, making it difficult for parents and teachers to recognize the signs, said Dr. Sarah Shelton, Licensed Clinical Health Psychologist in Paducah. Signs of teen stress can range from angry outbursts to an emotional disconnect from their surroundings.

"Cognitively, stress affects teens differently than adults, because the teenage brain is fixated on the short term with failure to recognize the lesser impact of a current problem over the long term," Shelton said, using the example of broken-hearted teenagers really believing they will never love again.

Early prevention is key and the quicker a parent or an educator can notice significant changes in a teen's personality, mood state or behavior, the quicker a teen can be helped, Shelton said.

"Stress left untreated can develop into a depressive episode or anxiety disorder, which can require more extensive treatment," Shelton said.

"For example, stress can be a causal or exacerbating factor for migraines and gastrointestinal problems. Stress lowers immunity and is correlated with several autoimmune conditions as well as heart disease."

While many adults assume the teenage years to be some of the most carefree in a young person's life, Shelton said the reality is that today's teens are increasingly facing adult-level problems, though only equipped with child-level coping abilities.

The Associated Press contributed to this article.

Call Will Pinkston, a Sun staff writer, at 270-575-8676.



Associated Press

Thera Sanchez, a high school senior in Le Roy, NY, talks about her mysterious illness on the "Today Show" in New York. Sanchez and several other classmates started suffering from a breakout of uncontrollable tics that doctors have attributed to conversion disorder.

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The Spine Center at the Orthopaedic Institute of Western Kentucky is the region's only comprehensive treatment facility focusing exclusively on spinal diseases.

Founded by K. Brandon Streng, M.D. and Clint Hill, M.D., the Spine Center emphasizes non-operative treatment whenever possible to alleviate pain and increase overall function, whether getting back to work or returning to leisure activities. If patients fail to improve with the latest conservative treatment modalities, both surgeons are fellowship trained in the most advanced minimally invasive surgical techniques for treating both cervical and lumbar conditions.

The Spine Center has recently added three additional practitioners in order to accommodate increasing demand for its services. Matt Hughes, Mikal Bailey, and Christopher Hodges are all highly trained physician assistants focusing entirely on spinal problems. All three have been specifically trained to employ the latest non-operative treatment

options for all types of spinal pathology. Their addition to the Spine Center at the Orthopaedic Institute allows for a much more rapid and efficient evaluation for patients suffering from spinal disease, allowing treatment to begin as soon as possible. If non-operative treatments are not successful and surgery does become necessary, Drs. Streng and Hill are available immediately to discuss the newest minimally invasive surgical procedures that are now possible right here in West Kentucky.

The Spine Center at the Orthopaedic Institute is committed to providing the region with quality, compassionate care, close to home.

Previously, patients often were required to drive 2 to 3 hours to bigger cities to receive treatment of even basic spinal problems. This is simply no longer necessary as Dr. Streng and Dr. Hill have brought the same level of spine care available before only at major academic centers to Western Kentucky.

As a symbol of long term commitment to the region, the Orthopaedic Institute has recently started construction on a new state of the art Center of Excellence. Our new facility should be completed and ready to serve the community by March 2012 and will offer patients easy access to a comprehensive evaluation and treatment plan for all spinal conditions.



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Top of the Chart

Lourdes Foundation provides hospital with tech, services

BY ALAN REED

areed@paducahsun.com

Money raised by the Lourdes Foundation saves lives.

Tara Miller, executive director of the Lourdes Foundation, said her non-profit group collects money from fund raising events, memorial contributions and private or corporate donations. The foundation, working with Lourdes hospital, buys needed pieces of medical equipment and the latest technology for patients. It also provides funds to renovate patient and family waiting areas.

A third part of the foundation's mission is to provide assistance with medical care for patients who are uninsured or under-insured. The foundation supports Lourdes' hospice program with about \$200,000 a year. It also provides hospice caregivers with laptops and mobile office equipment to communicate on the go.

"We've been able to purchase several things for our Women's Center to provide care," Miller said. "We bought a \$100,000 MRI machine that's one of the best defenses against breast cancer. We have a 4D ultrasound machine that we use not only so women can see their babies, but we can use it on something suspicious that could be a cancer growing in the body."

Some other contributions have gone toward finishing Lourdes' two new hybrid catheter and cardiac surgery suites, the cardiac department and equipment on ambulances that allows paramedics to transmit cardiac data to the hospital before patients arrive.

"It absolutely, no doubt in my mind, saved my life," Margaret Hagan, a Paducah breast cancer survivor, said. She had a mammogram in 2010, and was called in for

a follow-up MRI a week later that detected the cancer. "I had a very aggressive form of cancer. I think if they did not have that machine, I would not be here today."

Hagan praised the Lourdes Foundation and how donated money leads to projects and equipment that benefit the community.

The foundation's next fundraiser is Mardi Gras and All that Jazz on Feb. 21 from 6 to 9 p.m at the event center at Harrah's. Individual tickets are available for \$50.

"Through the generosity of our donors, Lourdes can continue to provide advanced technology and an experienced, compassionate health care team to save lives and provide for the special needs of every patient," said Dr. Lisa Chaney Lasher, medical director of the Lourdes Women's Center in a letter dated Feb. 8.

For more information or tickets to

"Through the generosity of our donors, Lourdes can continue to provide advanced technology and an experienced, compassionate health care team to save lives and provide for the special needs of every patient."

Dr. Lisa Chaney Lasher

Medical director, Lourdes Women's Center

Mardi Gras and all that Jazz, or to donate, call 270-444-2205.

Contact Alan Reed, a Paducah Sun staff writer, at 270-575-8658.

Spine Center

The Spine Center at the Orthopaedic Institute of Western Kentucky is the region's only comprehensive treatment facility focusing exclusively on spinal diseases and injuries. Founded by K. Brandon Strenge, M.D. and Clint Hill, M.D., the Spine Center has recently added three additional practitioners in order to accommodate increasing demand for its services. Matt Hughes, PA-C, ATC; Mikal Bailey, MPAS, PA-C; and Christopher Hodges, PA-C are all highly trained physician assistants focusing entirely on spinal problems.

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Christopher R. Hodges, PA-C

Christopher R. Hodges, PA-C, graduated from Drexel University in the PA Program and is Board Certified in Medicine and Surgery. He has 22 years of experience in the Paducah area and was the 4th Physician Assistant to be introduced to the region. Christopher has experience in neurosurgery, neurology, occupational medicine and clinical research.

Mikal A. Bailey, MPAS, PA-C

Mikal A. Bailey, MPAS, PA-C graduated from the University of Kentucky Physician Assistant Program. He also holds advanced degrees in Clinical Laboratory Sciences. He has been a practicing Physician Assistant for nine years and has experience in emergency medicine, internal medicine, and pediatrics as well as critical care medicine.

Matthew Hughes, PA-C, ATC

Matthew Hughes, PA-C, ATC graduated from Southern Illinois University Carbondale with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Kinesiology (Athletic Training Specialization) and a Masters of Science degree in Physicians Assistant Studies. Matthew has experience in physical therapy as well as clinical experience.



Blood banks foresee shortage in high travel months

BY WILL PINKSTON

wpinkston@paducahsun.com

Constantly in need of blood donations, blood banks face unique circumstances in light of the fluid nature of today's society that's always on the move.

Supplying the area's hospitals with their ever-present need for blood of all types, the American Red Cross does more than its fair share of blood drives to fill the coffers of hospital blood banks. Though certain times of the year pose greater stress on blood supplies when our society gears up to hit the road.

With summer and winter months most commonly associated with scholastic breaks — May through August, December and January — Red Cross officials prepare for a decrease in their normally steady supply of blood, said Regina Raccuglia, Tennessee Valley Blood Services Region communications manager.

"We really rely on the students to come and donate, and when students leave that's when we see the supply wane," Raccuglia said. "That's generally when we really turn to the media to raise awareness of our growing need."

Exacerbated by the lack of student donors, many of those months fall along the same seasonal patterns as severe weather, especially in the western Kentucky area. Not only are there the inherent dangers associated with severe thunderstorms, snow storms keep people from venturing outside, much less going to a blood donor clinic, said Tim Ryerson, CEO of the Tennessee Valley Blood Services Region.

"Each and every day this region has to collect an 'X' amount of units to process enough blood to get it to our hospitals," Ryerson said. "It tends to be rougher to collect during these times, though hospitals need this on a daily setting."

Due to the networked nature of the



Red Cross officials prepare for a decrease in their blood supply during the summer and winter months as fewer students donate during scholastic breaks.

Red Cross, a shortage in this region could be made up for with blood from neighboring regions, but in the case of a major shortage, hospitals would begin looking to necessary

measures. Judy Holloway, Western Baptist Hospital blood bank supervisor, said immediate rationing of blood would take effect.

"We would need to reserve our

supply for those surgeries that were emergent or could not be delayed," Holloway said. "Another option would be to ration the blood by asking physicians if they could transfuse less."

As opposed to a physician ordering two units of blood for transfusion, the physician might deem it necessary to use only one unit at the time, until a second might be made available, Holloway said.

Not only do the scholastic breaks preoccupy families that normally would be donors, the travel in and of itself can eliminate a person as an eligible donor. Currently people 17 and older can donate whole blood once every 56 days, though a spring break locale outside of the nation could compromise your donor status.

People traveling in a region where malaria was found must wait one year, while someone living in a region afflicted by the disease must wait three years.

People who spent long periods in an area with mad cow disease cannot donate at all. And someone who has been to Iraq must wait one year for fear of Leishmaniasis, a disease spread by the bite of the female sandfly, according to the Red Cross website.

"The eligible population has declined over the years due to traveling outside of the country and there are more restrictions that makes people ineligible over the course of a year," Ryerson said.

With an aging population, Ryerson said the increased demand for blood donations necessitates donors on a regular basis. As the months start warming up, Raccuglia said to expect more blood drives in the area to prepare for the summer slump and encouraged people to consider donating the lifesaving gift.

Call Will Pinkston, a Sun staff writer, at 270-575-8676.

Study: Electric boost helps brain learn better

BY MALCOLM RITTER

Associated Press

NEW YORK — People learned better when a key part of their brains got mild zaps of electricity, a finding that may someday help Alzheimer's patients keep more of their memories.

In a small but tantalizing study, participants played a video game in which they learned the locations of stores in a virtual city. They recalled the locations better if they learned them while receiving a painless boost from tiny electrodes buried deep inside their brains.

In the future, that strategy might help curb memory loss for people in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease, suggested Dr. Itzhak Fried, a neurosurgeon at the University of California, Los Angeles. But he cautioned that the results were preliminary.

Using implanted electrodes to treat brain disease is hardly new. Such "deep-brain stimulation" has been used for about a decade for Parkinson's disease and some other disorders. Researchers are also testing it for depression.

Some 80,000 or more people worldwide have had stimulation units implanted, mostly for Parkinson's.

Fried and colleagues reported the new work in the Feb. 2 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. It was financed by the federal govern-

"Whether (the study) will translate into something useful, we do not know. You don't want to do brain surgery on people unless you have a pretty clear idea you're going to make them better."

Dr. Andres Lozano

Professor of neurosurgery, University of Toronto

ment and the Dana Foundation.

"I think it's a terrific paper," said Dr. Andres Lozano, a professor of neurosurgery at the University of Toronto, who didn't participate in the work but is studying the approach in Alzheimer's patients. The new work shows stimulation can modify the workings of brain circuits that control memory in people, he said.

But like Fried, he cautioned that the research was still in the early stages.

"Whether it will translate into something useful, we do not know," he said, noting that years of additional study would be needed.

"You don't want to do brain surgery on people unless you have a pretty clear idea you're going to make them better," Lozano said. Deep-brain electrodes are implanted through holes drilled in the skull.

The study participants were seven epilepsy patients who had the electrodes implanted to help surgeons identify the source of their seizures.

were asked to find. The electrical stimulation was turned on while they learned the locations of some stores, but not others.

Testing showed that the stimulation made a difference. When given a store to find, the patients took a more direct route to it, and got there faster, if they had learned its location during a time of stimulation. When researchers looked at how much extra wandering they did beyond the shortest possible path, they found that stimulation reduced this excess by an average of 64 percent.

The patients were tested only a few minutes after learning the store locations, so it's not yet clear how long the effect can last, Fried said. Researchers will also have to see if stimulation helps for other kinds of knowledge, he said.

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A push for family input to detect dementia earlier

BY LAURAN NEERGAARD

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Alexis McKenzie's mother had mild dementia, but things sounded OK when she phoned home: Dad was with her, finishing his wife's sentences as they talked about puttering through the day and a drive to the store.

Then their phone service was cut off. "I mailed that check," McKenzie's father insisted. No, he'd mailed the phone company a bank deposit slip instead. McKenzie visited and discovered spoiling food. Dad the caregiver was in trouble, too.

Dementia can sneak up on families. Its sufferers are pretty adept at covering early lapses, and spouses sometimes compensate. Doctors too frequently are fooled as well.

Now specialists are pushing for the first National Alzheimer's Plan to help overcome this barrier to early detection, urging what's called dementia-capable primary care, more screenings for warning signs and regular checks of caregivers' own physical and mental health.

For a doctor to ask someone with brewing dementia, "How are you?" isn't enough, says Dr. Laurel Coleman, a geriatric physician at Maine Medical Center, part of a federal advisory council tackling the issue.

"So often I hear, 'The doctor only asks my mom how she is. She says fine and it's over,'" says Coleman. "That's not dementia-capable, or dementia-aware, primary care."

Family input should be mandatory, she told a recent council meeting. It's the only way to know if the person really is eating and taking her medicines as she claims, and not forgetting to turn off the stove.

The question is how to square that input with patient confidentiality, especially if the person never filed the legal forms clearing family members to intervene, as happened with McKenzie.

How to get around the hidden-dementia conundrum?

■ Medicare's new annual wellness visit pays for cognitive screening, simple tests that signal who should be referred for more extensive brain exams. "Even if primary-care physicians don't consider themselves experts at evaluating for Alzheimer's disease, or don't feel comfortable, they can screen," the Alzheimer's Association's Beth Kallmyer says.

■ The government's Alzheimer's advisers want doctors to steer families toward advanced-care planning, including designating a health care power of attorney, as soon as dementia is diagnosed.

Montefiore's Dr. Gary Kennedy says early diagnosis gives patients a say in how they want to be cared for while they're still capable of making those decisions.

■ A health care proxy won't be used until the person is quite sick. So Kallmyer advises also signing what's called a "release of information" allowing the doctor to discuss the person's care with whoever is named right away.

Such steps are important, Kennedy says, because advancing dementia leaves people so unaware of their deficits that they can take family or doctor input "as an affront." He always asks new patients if he can fill in their loved ones, or invite them in from the waiting room, as a way of starting that conversation.

■ Doctors can violate patient confidentiality if they believe the person's decisions or behavior has become a danger, Kennedy notes.

Plus, regularly seeking that input takes more time than the typical 15-minute visit and is poorly reimbursed, notes Coleman. But she says more physicians are starting to be trained in dementia's challenges.

More than 5 million Americans are estimated to have Alzheimer's or similar forms of dementia, although as many as half may not be formally diagnosed. With the rapidly aging population, the toll is projected to reach up to 16 million by 2050.

The Obama administration is drafting a national strategy to try to



slow that coming avalanche — with research aiming for some effective treatments by 2025 — plus find ways for struggling families to better cope today.

Step 1 is earlier detection. McKenzie directs an Alzheimer's assisted-living facility in Washington, so she knows about dementia. Still, it took some sleuthing to determine how much her 82-year-old parents, living a few hours away in Maryland, were deteriorating. She says her father refused any assistance in caring for her mother, and together the couple

put up such a good front that even their regular physician hadn't realized their shared answers to standard check-up questions — How are you eating? Has anything changed? — simply weren't true.

"It's almost as if they're sharing a brain. That's how they get through a day," McKenzie says.

Sure, dementia patients' stories can be believable.

"It happens in doctors' offices all the time," says Beth Kallmyer, vice president of constituent services at the Alzheimer's Association. That's why it's crucial that family members are part of the screening process.

The diseased brain may not be able to pull up a recent memory, but longer-term memories remain, she explains.

So an intricate description of, say, cooking last night's dinner may ring true because it was a real dinner, just not last night's.

And a long-married couple in a familiar routine and surroundings can appear far more normal than they really are — until something upsets that balancing act, like the caregiving spouse getting sick, adds Dr. Gary Kennedy, geriatric psychiatry chief at New York's Montefiore Medical Center.

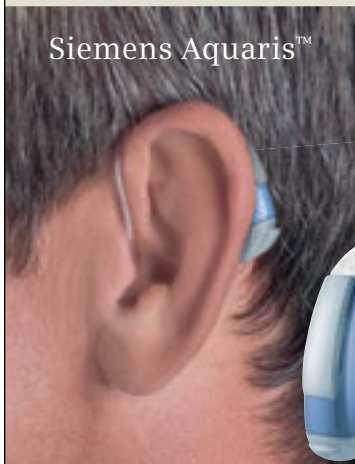
McKenzie says her father would never discuss naming a health care proxy and her parents were furious that she'd voiced concerns to their physician. She had to think up non-confrontational ways to get invited back into their doctor visits: "I'll drive you, and then why don't I take notes in case you have any questions later?"

It turned out that McKenzie's father had a non-cancerous brain tumor causing his own gradual dementia symptom.

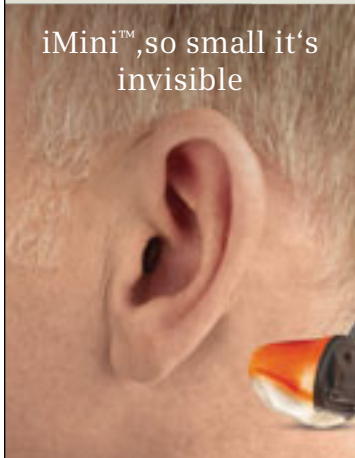
Finally, she had to go to court to get her parents the care they needed in an assisted living facility near their hometown.



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