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For immediate release

DHHR releases report on dementia in West Virginia

A new report entitled “An Overview of Dementia: The Growing Crisis in West Virginia” was recently released by the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Bureau for Public Health. The current report updates a previous report on dementia in the Mountain State issued in 2005. The report includes data on both Alzheimer’s disease, by far the most diagnosed type of dementia, which accounts for approximately 80 percent of all dementia cases, and vascular dementia, which accounts for 10 percent to 20 percent of all dementia. According to the report, it is estimated by the Alzheimer’s Association that there are currently 44,000 people with Alzheimer’s disease living in West Virginia. By 2025, this number is expected to increase to over 50,000.

Dementia was the 5th leading cause of death in the state in 2007, rising from 6th in 2005 and 2006. By 2008, dementia had risen to the 4th leading cause of death in West Virginia. The increase in mortality has occurred in both Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias, attributable in part to a growing awareness of the illnesses, earlier diagnosis and the state’s aging population.

In addition to statistical information about Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias, the report includes chapters addressing the causes of dementia, as well as risk factors for and treatment and prevention of the disease. While the greatest risk factor is age, the report cites several studies that have found that dementia is subject to many of the same risk factors as stroke and other cardiovascular illnesses, including smoking, high

cholesterol, high blood pressure, physical inactivity, obesity, diets deficient in fruits and vegetables and diabetes. West Virginia adults have traditionally reported significantly higher rates of these risk factors than adults nationwide.

The report includes a section on the economic costs of dementia, Alzheimer's disease in particular. The estimated annual economic costs of Alzheimer's disease in the United States total at least \$148 billion according to a 2005 report published by the Alzheimer's Association. That amount is broken down to include \$91 billion in Medicare costs, \$21 billion for state and federal Medicaid costs and \$36.5 billion for indirect costs to businesses through the absenteeism and lost productivity of caregivers who are employed.

A study of 2007 hospital discharges among state residents that had a diagnosis of dementia is also included in the report. Between 1998 and 2007, the rate of discharges with dementia as a principal diagnosis increased by 29 percent. The charges for dementia hospitalizations increased 184 percent, from \$3,692,000 to \$10,492,000. Among patients with an Alzheimer's disease diagnosis, the rate was 29 percent higher in West Virginia than in the United States as a whole.

The report is available online at <http://www.wvdhhr.org/bph/hsc/statserv/publist.asp> or in hard copy from the West Virginia Health Statistics Center at 304.558.9100.

Additional information about dementia may be obtained from the West Virginia Alzheimer's Association online at <http://www.alz.org/wv>.