

Alzheimer's Update

OCTOBER, 2000

DRUG UPDATE

New Drug Approved - Exelon®

Rivastigmine tartrate (also known by the trade name Exelon®) is the third drug approved by the FDA specifically to treat symptoms of Alzheimer's disease. Individuals who took rivastigmine in clinical trials showed greater improvement in cognitive abilities such as thinking and remembering. As with this drug and the other approved drugs for Alzheimer's disease, it is not a cure for Alzheimer's and it does not stop the progression of the fundamental disease process.

How do these drugs work?

In Alzheimer's disease, nerve cells in brain regions important for memory, thought, and judgment degenerate and die for unknown reasons. Nerves in the brain normally communicate by means of a neurotransmitter (a chemical) in the brain called **acetylcholine**, which is produced by nerve cells. By damaging and killing nerves in the acetylcholine system, Alzheimer's disease disrupts the brain's communication network and decreases the amount of acetylcholine available to carry messages among surviving nerves. The three drugs currently approved and available for use increase the amount of acetylcholine enabling nerve cells to communicate better.

The other two drugs approved to treat symptoms of Alzheimer's disease are named Tacrine (Cognex®) approved in 1992, and Donepezil Hydrochloride (Aricept®), approved in 1996.

Alzheimer's Association Fact Sheet

Vaccine for Alzheimer's

Elan Pharmaceuticals, a division of Elan Corporations, have been testing a potential vaccine for Alzheimer's disease and have shown that the vaccine is well tolerated in humans. In prior animal research, scientists identified how the vaccine works to clear plaques out of the brain. During the course of this research, scientists have developed a greater understanding of how the vaccine works to clear amyloid plaques out of the brain, and prevent additional plaques from forming. It has long been hypothesized that amyloid plaques obstruct nerve cell function and cause nerve cell death in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease. Scientists are optimistic that this vaccine will eventually be able to alter the course of this disease.

Alzheimer's Association News Release, July 2000

Follow-up Alzheimer's training coming to your area in the near future! Details in the December issue!

Since its induction in April of 1999, **Project Lifesaver**, operated by the 43rd Virginia SAR, Chesapeake Sheriff's office has placed **92** transmitters in various cities throughout Virginia, and has found and saved **30** individuals to date. The average recovery time to locate a lost individual is **22 minutes**. In addition to the time factor, Project Lifesaver is saving localities significant expense and manpower associated with extensive searches.

Transmitters have been placed in the following locations:

Chesapeake	Lynchburg, VA
Norfolk	Carrollton, VA
Virginia Beach	Pittsylvania
North Carolina	County
Suffolk	Rockingham Co.
Portsmouth	Danville, VA
Loudon County, VA	(October)
Parksley, VA	
Eastern Shore	

Project Lifesaver has received inquiries from Henrico County, Northumberland County, Amhurst County and Toronto, Canada.

Project Lifesaver is also available in North Carolina, Vermont, New Hampshire, Georgia, and Illinois. The 43rd VA SAR, Chesapeake Sheriff's Office is currently involved in training and assisting in project set-up in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Project Lifesaver is supported by donations and private corporate grants. Because of the demand within the state as well as outside of Virginia, the project needs funding to place full-time personnel to continue the service and expansion of Project Lifesaver.

For more information about Project Lifesaver, contact Col. Gene Saunders, Chief of SAR at (757) 432-4382.

**YOUR LOCAL ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION
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Shenandoah Valley Chapter
1301 Virginia Avenue
Harrisonburg, VA 22802
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Safe Return Statewide Coordinator

Jane Priest of the Alzheimer's Association, Northern Virginia chapter will be supervising and coordinating the National Alzheimer's Association *Safe Return* program throughout the state of Virginia in cooperation with the local Alzheimer's chapters in Virginia. She will provide coordination and education of the *Safe Return* program for criminal justice agency personnel, health care providers, and families of individuals with memory impairment. More information about the *Safe Return* program in the next edition of **Alzheimer's Update**.

