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Irene Joseph Anatomy & Physiology Band 3 December 19, 2012 Townsend Harris High School Irene Joseph Anatomy & Physiology Band 3 December 19, 2012 Disease Paper: Alzheimer's I/II. What is Alzheimer's and What Causes It? Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia that causes problems with memory, thinking, and social/behavioral skills. The direct cause of it is not yet fully understood, but based on studies, the disease seems to be a result of the combination of genetic material, lifestyle, and environmental factors that affect the brain. While Alzheimer's is most commonly found among people above the age of 65, it is not what would be considered a normal part of aging. However, it is the most common risk factor for this disease. As the age of a person reaches 65, the risk of getting this disease doubles every five years. III. Effects on the Body The effects of Alzheimer's are directly brought upon by what happens to the brain. Brain cells are damaged and killed; the brain of an individual with the disease has many fewer cells than the average, functioning brain. Between the very few surviving cells, there are also many fewer connections. Due to this, the brain goes through severe shrinkage. This may be due to the plaques and tangles that form within the organ that disrupt proper cell to cell communication and inhibit the transport of essential nutrients and other materials. The effects of Alzheimer's on the individual worsen over time as the brain deteriorates. According to Barry Reisberg, M. D., clinical director of the New York University School of Medicine's Silberstein Aging and Dementia Research Center, Alzheimer's can be split up into seven stages. In first stage of the disease, there are absolutely no symptoms and the person functions normally with no signs of dementia. This usually lasts up to eight years. Soon afterwards, the person experiences very mild cognitive decline in which he feels that he has "

memory lapses". Familiar words and locations of everyday objects are forgotten. Family and friends may dismiss this as normal signs of aging. The cognitive decline worsens in the next few stages as the person has trouble remembering names of familiar objects and people, recent events, personal history, and finds difficulty with planning and organizing. In the last few stages, the disease reaches its peak as the person inflicted forgets where they are or what day it is, loses awareness of events and activities, experiences changes in sleeping and eating patterns, and needs help completing tasks like getting dressed and using the bathroom. In the final stage of the disease, the person loses all ability to respond to their environment, hold conversations, and control movement. They lose simple abilities like smiling, swallowing, supporting themselves, and their reflexes become abnormal. Physical signs of aging also become much more prominent once diagnosed.

IV. Treatments and Cures Unfortunately, there are no treatments or cures that can reverse or halt the progression of the disease, thus far. However, there are medicines available to help manage the symptoms. The earlier the disease is diagnosed, the longer the patient can continue living under normal conditions through the help of medicine. The disease progresses for about two to 20 years and an individual typically lives between eight to 10 years after diagnosis. People with Alzheimer's can develop coexisting diseases and may die from those. A typical coexisting disease brought upon with Alzheimer's is pneumonia.

V. People Affected Alzheimer's disease is the sixth leading cause of death in the USA with an estimated 5.4 Americans diagnosed today. With age, the chances of getting the disease increases. Because of the sole reason, Alzheimer's is more commonly found among women because their life expectancy is longer than

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that of men. As the life expectancy of the human race has been increasing, the impact of the disease has also been increasing. However, there are still approximately half a million Americans below the age of 65 who have some form of dementia, Alzheimer's included. This is known as young onset or early onset. VI. Conclusion Alzheimer's is now a very widespread disease and has taken its toll on not only its patients, but also their families. Family members may feel angry, depressed, and frustrated when trying to cope with their loved one who is suffering. It's hard for them to understand and handle the fact that someone whom they once loved and shared many memories with has now become a stranger. Families may also suffer through other financial and legal problems when caring for a patient. Patients with Alzheimer's also need a lot of attention and tend to often be confused, agitated, and stubborn. It's important to be patient and considerate when approaching and helping those afflicted. Although there aren't any cures for the disease, research is being done and hopefully one day, the Alzheimer's disease will just be a part of history. Bibliography " Alzheimer's Disease & Dementia | Alzheimer's Association." Alzheimer's Disease & Dementia | Alzheimer's Association. N. p., n. d. Web. 15 Dec. 2012. " Alzheimer's Disease Treatment: Medications and Therapies." WebMD. WebMD, 03 May 2005. Web. 15 Dec. 2012. . " Alzheimer's Foundation of America." Alzheimer's Foundation of America. N. p., n. d. Web. 15 Dec. 2012. . " Effects of Alzheimer's Disease on the Family." LIVESTRONG.COM. N. p., n. d. Web. 15 Dec. 2012. . Staff, Mayo Clinic. " Definition." Mayo Clinic. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 18 Jan. 2011. Web. 15 Dec. 2012. .