



**SYMPOSIUM,
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Overview:

5.4 million Americans have Alzheimer's Disease: a devastating neurodegenerative disorder that impairs memory and cognitive function. With the aging American population, this number is projected to quadruple by 2050, requiring even millions more caregivers. Despite advances in drug research, Alzheimer's is the only leading cause of death in the US that still cannot be prevented, cured, or even slowed. Until a cure arrives, we as a society must work to alleviate the psychological and physical burden of the disease on both patients and caregivers. As an organization, we work toward this goal by making weekly one-on-one visits to intermediate-to-late-stage Alzheimer's patients living in nearby nursing homes to reduce their isolation and build meaningful friendships. In addition to this effort, we believe it is crucial to develop innovative care-giving practices and social policies that will help all of those impacted by the disease and that will require not only collaboration across disciplines, but also awareness among the nation's future caregivers: college students. To this end, we hope to facilitate dialogue among Harvard faculty members regarding these subjects by holding a symposium open to all students and the public. During this interdisciplinary event, experts who grapple with the challenges of dementia will briefly present their research, experiences, and perspectives on this complex issues. We hope to welcome representatives from these backgrounds across the university:

- Social workers, geriatricians, neurologists, and psychiatrists from Harvard Medical School
- Investigators from the Harvard School of Public Health
- Scholars grappling with physician-assisted suicide and end-of-life care from Harvard Law School
- Policy developers dealing with the economics of aging, Social Security, and Medicare from the Kennedy School of Government and the Economics Department
- Health care business and management experts to address how hospitals and insurance companies are responding to the aging population and the changing federal system from Harvard Business School

Objectives:

- Increase university-wide dialogue and collaboration on the health care and policy challenges posed by America's aging population, with an emphasis on dementia.
- Excite interest in careers in geriatrics, social work, and advocacy among Harvard undergraduates.
- Provide students from the College and other schools of the university with a concrete foundation for responding to dementia among their own friends and families
- Boost community awareness of the resources available for coping with the challenges of Alzheimer's disease.
- Help raise support and potentially funding for Alzheimer's Buddies