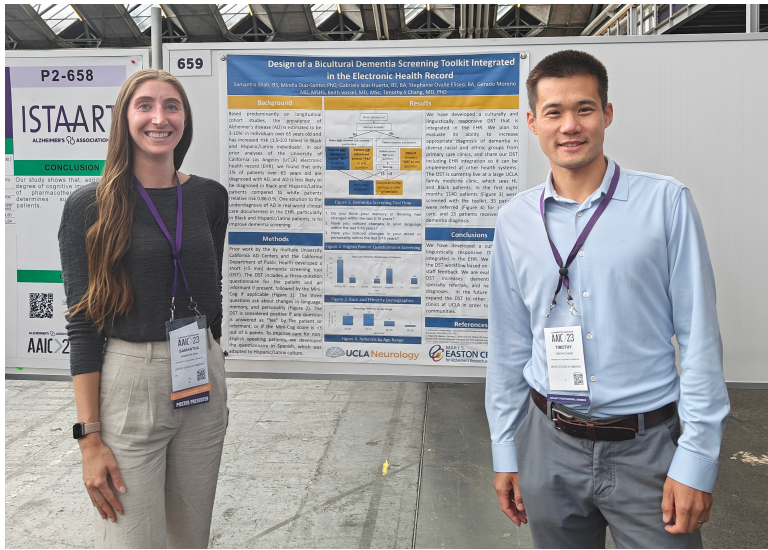


Autumn 2023 Newsletter

- | [Overview: AAIC 2023](#) |
 | [Highlights - Alzheimer's Association 2023 Facts and Figures](#) |
 | [New Addition to the Easton Center](#) | [Clinical Trials](#) | [Upcoming Events](#) |

The Mary S. Easton Center for Alzheimer's Research and Care at UCLA has very active teams working on basic research, drug discovery, biomarkers for early diagnosis and clinical activity including clinical trials, cognitive testing, and patient care.

Overview: Alzheimer's Association International Conference (AAIC) 2023



By: [Timothy Chang, MD, PhD](#), Assistant Professor and Augustus S. Rose Chair in Neurology, and [Samantha Shah](#), Project Manager, Chang Lab

New research presented at the [Alzheimer's Association International Conference \(AAIC\) 2023](#) covered various aspects of Alzheimer's disease and dementia research, including advancements in treatment, early and accurate diagnosis, and our understanding of risk factors for Alzheimer's and other dementias. This year's conference was held both virtually and in-person in Amsterdam, Netherlands,

attracting over 10,000 attendees and featuring more than 3,000 scientific presentations. Easton Center faculty Drs. Keith Vossel, Timothy Chang, Kacie Deters, Daniel Silverman, Maryam Beigi, Elizabeth Rose Mayeda, Susan Bookheimer, and Yeonsu Song presented research findings at AAIC 2023.

The conference unveiled the [first-ever nationwide estimates of Alzheimer's](#) prevalence at the county level in the United States. Researchers from Rush University Medical Center revealed that the eastern and southeastern regions of the U.S. have the highest prevalence of Alzheimer's dementia, likely due to higher percentages of older individuals and those from higher-risk groups. This information can guide resource allocation for public health programs in affected regions.

Regarding treatment advancements, the Alzheimer's Association highlighted findings from trials of both drug and non-drug interventions for Alzheimer's disease. Eli Lilly presented comprehensive data from

the [TRAILBLAZER-ALZ 2 Phase 3 clinical trial of donanemab](#), indicating that thoroughly removing beta-amyloid from the brain can significantly slow disease progression in early symptomatic Alzheimer's patients. This underscores the potential for treatment benefits when initiated early in the disease course.

Non-drug interventions were also highlighted, including findings from the [Aging and Cognitive Health Evaluation in Elders \(ACHIEVE\)](#) study, which demonstrated that hearing aids significantly slowed cognitive decline in older adults with mild to moderate hearing loss and risk factors for cognitive decline.

Additionally, AAIC featured two innovative therapeutic approaches for Alzheimer's based on [CRISPR](#) gene editing. These approaches aim to mitigate the impact of the APOE-e4 risk gene and reduce the production of beta-amyloid in the brain, a key feature of Alzheimer's. CRISPR technology is accelerating drug target identification, expediting drug discovery, and creating platforms for next-generation treatments.

A significant breakthrough was reported in the field of Alzheimer's diagnosis. Researchers from the University of Gothenburg introduced a [simple finger-prick blood test capable of detecting Alzheimer's markers](#) using a single dried blood drop, offering a quick, noninvasive, and cost-effective diagnostic option. Additionally, Lund University's study revealed that blood-based biomarkers for Alzheimer's were more than 80% accurate. These blood tests hold great potential for early diagnosis and treatment.

Another intriguing finding showcased the link between [gut health and cognitive function](#). Individuals with chronic constipation were found to have worse cognition, equivalent to three years of additional cognitive aging, compared to those with healthy bowel habits. Researchers also identified gut bacteria associated with increased dementia risk and potential neuroprotective gut bacteria, emphasizing the role of the gut microbiome in overall health.

Furthermore, a study conducted by the Danish Dementia Research Centre highlighted the concerning association between [new opioid use in older adults with dementia](#) and a significantly increased risk of death, particularly in the first two weeks after initiation. This emphasizes the importance of discussing pain medication options with patients, families, and physicians.

Lastly, researchers from the University of California, Davis, reported that [volunteering later in life](#) is associated with better cognitive performance, suggesting that volunteering may protect against Alzheimer's and other dementias in older adults.

Highlights from the Alzheimer’s Association 2023 Facts and Figures



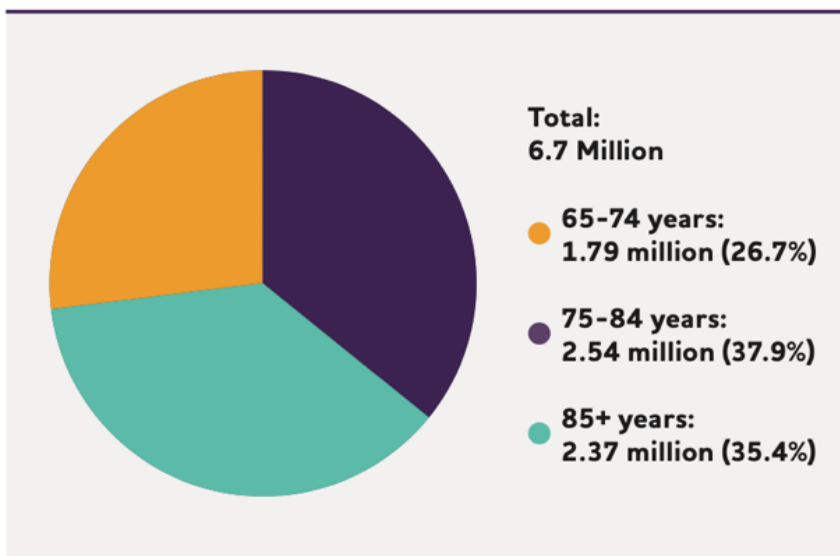
By: [Monica Moore, MSG](#), Community Health Program Manager

I recently had the honor of attending the memorial service of the husband of a long-time caregiver support group member. Her husband had a 10+ year journey with dementia, and she found love and support during those years in Mary S. Easton Center’s caregiver support group. Her husband was yet another life lost to this cruel disease, and his wife, another caregiver, was faced with the “long good-bye,” all the while facing her own serious health issues. We know the statistics, and you will read some of the latest ones below, but in many ways, the scope of the impact of this disease is not fully realized until you have walked with someone along the journey. Organizations such as the

Easton Center, Alzheimer’s Association, Alzheimer’s Los Angeles, and others are here to provide support and care for the faces of this disease, not just the statistics.

The 2023 Alzheimer’s Association Facts and Figures report shines a light on the public health crisis of Alzheimer’s and other dementias in the United States of America; it details the numbers behind the millions of faces and stories. While providing updates on brain changes that occur with age, risk factors for Alzheimer’s disease, racial and ethnic differences in the prevalence of Alzheimer’s and other dementias, and many more topics, the 2023 report emphasizes the severity of this disease to its readers. According to the report, over 6 million Americans have Alzheimer’s disease in the United States, and about 1 in 9 people aged 65 and older are living with this disease. In 2019, Alzheimer’s was the fifth-leading cause of death among individuals aged 65 and older, and the report discussed that non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic older adults are disproportionately more likely than White older adults to have Alzheimer’s or other dementias.

Number and Ages of People 65 or Older with Alzheimer's Dementia, 2023*



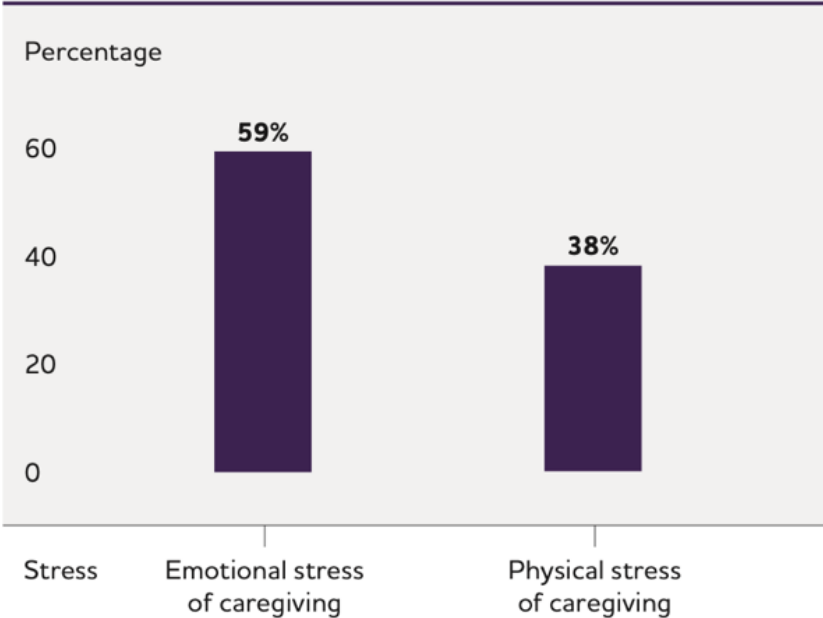
Source: Chart and data courtesy of 2023 Facts and Figures Report, Alzheimer’s Association.

Between 2020 and 2025, the number of people with AD is projected to increase dramatically. In California, there is estimated to be a 21.7% growth. With this increase comes many systemic challenges that will need to be addressed by our state, communities, and healthcare providers. The report discusses many of these, but for the purposes of this article, I would like to highlight two sections of this year's report, "Caregiving" and the special report: "The Patient Journey in an Era of New Treatments."

Caregiving

More than 11 million Americans provide unpaid care for a family member or friend with dementia. The family caregivers of this disease are often untrained and ill-prepared for the demands of caregiving. They are faced with a multitude of tasks such as helping with daily activities and personal care, medications, managing behavioral symptoms of the disease, managing in-home care, addressing family issues related to care, and providing emotional support and a sense of security to the person with dementia. Six in ten caregivers also worked an average of 35 hours a week outside the home, most of whom are women caring for a parent. The study reported that Black caregivers are more likely to provide more than 40 hours of care per week, are more likely to experience financial burdens due to caregiving and were 69% less likely to use respite services than White caregivers.

Percentage of Caregivers Who Report High to Very High Stress Due to Caregiving



Created from data from the Alzheimer's Association.^{A11}

Source: Graph courtesy of 2023 Facts and Figures Report, Alzheimer's Association.

Family caregivers often report experiencing significant physical and emotional stress due to the demands of daily caregiving. Spousal caregivers are more likely to experience increased burden over time, most of which occurs as behavioral changes increase and functional ability decreases. Rates of depression are

higher in dementia caregivers (30-40%). Caregiver interventions are crucial to improve the quality of life of the spouse, adult children, friends, and families who provide care for a person with dementia. Case management, education, counseling, therapy, support groups, and respite can help reduce stress, increase caregiver well-being, and can help improve the quality of care they provide their loved ones.

Special Report - The Patient Journey in an Era of New Treatments

2022 and 2023 brought the approval of two new FDA treatments for Alzheimer's for the first time in over 20 years. Aducanumab and Lecanemab are aimed at changing the underlying biology of the disease, and while they are not a cure for this disease, they can change the course of the disease and its progression. These drugs remove the accumulation of amyloid in the brain, which is seen as one of the major underlying causes of dementia associated with Alzheimer's disease. To be eligible for these medications, one must be in the early stages of memory loss with a Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) or early Alzheimer's diagnosis. So, while these medications have the great ability to change the course of AD, the 2022 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures Special Report found that only four in 10 Americans would talk to their doctor right away when experiencing symptoms of MCI, and the rest would wait until symptoms interrupted their daily life before speaking with their doctor. This delay might make a person ineligible for the medications.

The 2023 report expanded upon the 2022 report and discusses that a large survey in the United States found that of the 10% of individuals age 45 and older who reported Subjective Cognitive Decline (a potential precursor to MCI), 54% had not consulted a health care professional about their symptoms. It also found that when symptoms interfered with function, 41% had not talked to a healthcare provider. Yet, it is not only patients who don't begin conversations about cognitive changes; this same study reported that nearly all primary care physicians (PCPs) report waiting for patients (97%) or family members (98%) to make them aware of symptoms or request an assessment. Speaking with a doctor meant risking a diagnosis, and a diagnosis was associated with the prospect of loss: loss of self-confidence, independence, and control.

When a person is concerned enough about memory problems to bring it up to a doctor, they often first mention the concern to their PCP, but most PCPs do not feel equipped to give an MCI or AD diagnosis due to the time constraints and their inability to thoroughly perform a cognitive evaluation. PCPs rely upon specialists to complete the proper assessments, yet there are not enough geriatricians, neurologists, psychiatrists, and neuropsychologists to meet the demand. The report discusses how the shortage of dementia care specialists affects those seeking medical care in a variety of ways, such as delayed access to health care professionals, diagnosis, treatment, and treatment centers, services, and support. The report goes on to discuss the way treatment and care vary across ethnic groups and cultures and how patients want to work with their PCPs to address cognitive health concerns. The report highlights how much work needs to be done to reduce stigma, raise awareness, and encourage young medical students with diverse backgrounds to pursue careers as dementia care specialists.

While the 2023 Facts and Figures Report gave us more numbers about the faces and the families affected by AD, it also encouraged a discussion. It encourages discussion about brain health, challenges that might occur with aging, the effect of AD on our country and community, and what needs to be done to

reduce disparities and stigma. The report also reminds us that if we want access to early treatment, we need to voice concerns to our doctors and be our own health advocates.

To read the full **2023 Alzheimer's Association Facts and Figures Report**, please visit <https://www.alz.org/media/Documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf>

▲TOP

New Addition to the Easton Center

Please join us in welcoming a new staff member to the Easton Center.



Photo: [Alana Andino, RN, BSN](#), Triage Registered Nurse

Alana Andino, RN, BSN, is a Triage Registered Nurse for the Integrated Memory Clinics, a collaboration between Neurology, Geriatric Medicine, and Geriatric Psychiatry. Alana received her Bachelor of Nursing degree from Mount Saint Mary's College. After graduating, Alana worked at the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center in the Neuroscience/Stroke Unit. Alana is very excited to contribute her love of nursing to the patients, families, and caregivers of the UCLA

Easton Center, Geriatric Medicine, and Geriatric Psychiatry.

Clinical Research Opportunities

If you would like to advance Alzheimer's disease research, please consider being a study participant. Below are the current recruiting trials. For a complete list of enrolling studies, visit our website at <https://eastonad.ucla.edu/>.

OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES:

- [Alzheimer's Disease Neuroimaging Initiative 4 \(ADNI4\) Protocol](#)
- [Alzheimer's Disease Research Center - Biomarkers in Neurodegenerative Disease \(ADRC-BIND\)](#)
- [ARTFL-LEFFTDS Longitudinal Frontotemporal Lobar Degeneration \(ALLFTD\)](#)
- [The Relationship of Hate to Dehumanization: An Exploration in Neurotypical and Frontotemporal Dementia \(FTD Hate Study\)](#)
- [Longitudinal Early-Onset Alzheimer's Disease Study \(LEADS\)](#)
- [Biomarkers for Vascular Contributions to Cognitive Impairment and Dementia \(MarkVCID\)](#)
- [Music Stimulation to Improve Cognition \(MUSIC\)](#)
- [New Imaging Dementia – Evidence for Amyloid Scanning Study \(New IDEAS\)](#)
- [National Institute on Aging Alzheimer's Disease Family Based Study \(NIA-AD-FBS\)](#)

INTERVENTIONAL STUDIES:

- [ENVISION Study](#)
- [SUVEN-502 Study](#)

▲TOP



For more information on our upcoming lectures and events, please visit the Easton Center [Community Calendar](#).

Boyle Heights 5K Run/Walk & Munchkin Fun Run + Free Community Health Fest & Classic Car Show

Date: Saturday, October 21, 2023

Time: 8:00 AM – 1:30 PM (PDT)

Location: Mariachi Plaza Metro Station

1831 E. 1st Street

Los Angeles, CA 90033

The Boyle Heights 5K Run/Walk is presenting a timed 5K Run & Munchkin Fun Run. Free-of-charge festivities include a Community Classic Car Show and Festival to promote wellness, physical fitness, music, and culture. An array of community partners, public agencies, schools, and organizations participate in this fun family event. The goal is to provide access to healthier alternatives and lifestyles to members of the community. The Equity for Latinx-Hispanic Healthy Aging Lab will be contributing to the event mission by presenting brain health and dementia prevention education in Spanish and English for our Latinx-Hispanic Angelinos. This is imperative as 86% of residents in Boyle Heights identify as Latinx-Hispanics (LA Times). [[Flyer](#)]

Registration: for the 5K Run/Walk at https://www.active.com/los-angeles-ca/running/distance-running-races/boyle-heights-5k-run-munchkin-run-2023?cmp=39-34-411813&afid=411813<cmp=254301<clickid=09_122387192_1fb8c122-4bbb-47df-96df-c9ff77f90c79&cmp=39N-DP260-BND10-SD230-DM20&cdg=affiliate-254301

Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's – Santa Monica

Date: Sunday, October 22, 2023

Time: 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM (PDT)

Location: Crescent Bay Park

2000 Ocean Ave.

Santa Monica, CA 90405

Held annually in more than 600 communities nationwide, Walk to End Alzheimer's is the world's largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's care, support, and research. Join the Easton Center in supporting this important cause and community partner by supporting our team or walking with us!

Join the Easton Center as we walk to raise funds and awareness for the Alzheimer's Association.
<http://act.alz.org/goto/UCLAEaston>

9th Annual Day of the Dead Community Procession

Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2023

Time: 6:30 PM (PDT)

Location: LA River Center & Gardens

570 W. Avenue 26th

Los Angeles, CA 90065

Join us in our Community Procession from the Cypress Park Branch library to the LA River Center & Gardens. Dress in your best "Day of the Dead" attire, no Halloween costumes! Free parking at the LA River Center & Gardens with a free shuttle bus ride from the LA River Center & Gardens to the Cypress Park Branch from 4:30-5:50 p.m. [[Flyer](#)]

REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED TO GUARANTEE FOOD!

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfj3E-t6h6SE45Maq1_43BsS5Se4k4EeWn_zNaR-bkjMotPiQ/viewform?pli=1

The Equity for Latinx-Hispanic Healthy Aging (ELHA) Lab will be present to celebrate in the community while providing resources on brain health and prevention education in Spanish and English!

Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's – LA Live

Date: Saturday, October 28, 2023

Time: 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM (PDT)

Location: LA Live

800 W. Olympic Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90015

Held annually in more than 600 communities nationwide, Walk to End Alzheimer's is the world's largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's care, support, and research. Join the Easton Center in supporting this important cause and community partner by supporting our team or walking with us!

Join the Easton Center as we walk to raise funds and awareness for the Alzheimer's Association.
<http://act.alz.org/goto/UCLAEastonDTLA>

Alzheimer's Los Angeles 3rd Annual Making Memories Festival

Date: Sunday, November 12, 2023

Time: 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM (PST)

Location: LA State Historic Park

1245 N. Spring Street

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Join the Easton Center and UCLA Health at the 3rd Annual Making Memories Festival. The Making Memories Festival is a multicultural music and food festival benefiting Alzheimer's Los Angeles. The event showcases performances by Ozomatli, J.Rocc, Beaux Gris & The Apocalypse, La Misa Negra and DJ Monalisa. The festival also features food from LA's favorite food trucks as well as informational booths and experiences focusing on brain health and other healthy lifestyle resources.

To purchase a ticket, visit: <https://AlzheimersLA.org/MakingMemories>

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[▲TOP](#)
