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Alzheimer's Disease Early Detection Screening Project

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Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a progressive brain disorder that affects an individual's memory, thinking, and behavior. Approximately 5.1 million Americans currently have AD. By 2030, the number of individuals over age 65 with AD is estimated to be 7.7 million. Although AD is the leading cause of dementia, it is underdiagnosed.

In the fall of 2006, the Alzheimer's Association of Northeastern New York (AANENY) received funding for an early detection grant from Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Inc. The pilot program uses the Alzheimer's Disease Caregiver Questionnaire, which is an 18-item screening tool administered to a caregiver or family member over age 65, regardless if he or she presents any signs of dementia. Results summarize cognitive and behavioral risk factors for AD; however, they do NOT provide a diagnosis.

Activities include recruiting and educating physicians, acquiring and processing surveys, and contacting and educating families. More specifically, staff at primary care provider offices administer the questionnaires. AANENY picks up completed questionnaires, tabulates the results, and then mails the results to the primary care provider and caregiver. The primary care provider follows up with positive screens by making referrals for further evaluation. Finally, AANENY provides caregivers with educational and supportive information.

The primary goal of this program is to increase the detection of AD in its earliest stage, in order to slow the progression of the disease, improve quality of life, and increase services for families. The long-term aspiration is to make screening of AD a routine procedure for all older adults.