

Alzheimer Europe Press release:

Alzheimer Europe rings the alarm about discriminatory practices in intensive care settings during the COVID-19 pandemic

Luxembourg, 3 April 2020 – At an online meeting organised by Alzheimer Europe, representatives from 22 national Alzheimer’s associations from 19 European countries adopted a call to governments and national health systems to urgently increase the infrastructure for intensive care needed for people affected by COVID-19 and to ensure any access or withdrawal regulations to life-saving treatment are based on sound ethical principles which do not discriminate against people with dementia.

In its position adopted on 3 April, Alzheimer Europe considers it unacceptable to systematically restrict access to ventilators during the COVID-19 pandemic to people living with Alzheimer’s disease and other types of dementia or people living in nursing homes. Where triage decisions become necessary, these should always be based on a patient’s individual prognosis and not solely be based on a person’s age, diagnosis or place of residence.

In addition, the association stresses the need

- to take into consideration a person’s expressed wishes, such as those expressed in an advance directive,
- to adhere to palliative care principles and guidelines,
- to develop clear medical protocols where triage decisions are taken by a team of healthcare professionals with expertise in intensive and palliative care,
- to regularly review and properly document any such triage decisions.

Commenting on the position, Helen Rochford-Brennan, chairperson of the European Working of People with Dementia, said: “I am grateful to Alzheimer Europe for coordinating this important response which is in line with the organisation’s commitment to a human rights based approach to dementia. Many people are able to live long and meaningful lives with dementia with a good quality of life. A diagnosis of dementia should never be a reason to be refused treatment, care or support”.

The full position of Alzheimer Europe is online here: <https://www.alzheimer-europe.org/Policy/Our-opinion-on/Triage-decisions-during-COVID-19-pandemic>

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Notes to editors:

Alzheimer Europe is the umbrella organisation of national Alzheimer associations and currently has 39 member organisations in 35 European countries. The mission statement of the organisation is to change perceptions, practice and policy to ensure equal access of people with dementia to a high level of care services and treatment options.

To support people with dementia, carers and Alzheimer’s associations during the COVID-19 pandemic, the organisation has dedicated a special section of its website to useful resources and links: <https://www.alzheimer-europe.org/Living-with-dementia/COVID-19>