

BAI BEACON

The Newsletter from Family and Community Services

Banner Alzheimer's Institute

www.banneralz.org • (602) 239-6900

February 2008: Volume 1, number 1



Banner Alzheimer's Institute

Introducing the BAI Beacon

This is the first issue of the BAI Beacon, a monthly newsletter from the Family and Community Services (FCS) program of the nonprofit Banner Alzheimer's Institute. The FCS program exists to provide people with dementia (PWD) and their caregivers with strategies for successful daily living. Our goal is to provide state of the art education about living with dementia, enhance quality of life for both the

PWD and caregiver, and to connect people with the best community resources available. Each month the BAI Beacon will cover topics important to caregivers including columns on: getting the most out of caregiving; "Ask the Doc;" current research; and a featured service of the month. If you have a comment or suggestion, please contact Jennifer Westlund, MSW, or Geri Hall, PhD, CNS, at (602) 239-6902.

Empowering care partners

The Memory Assistance and Planning Service (MAPS) program is an educational series for caregivers. It offers a unique blend of educational topics, support from other caregivers, and activities designed to enhance caregivers' lives. We offer the classes in two formats: 1) an eight-week, two-hour program with full activities; and 2) a modified, one-day program. MAPS will be offered eight times in

2008. The eight-week programs are held on Thursdays at the Institute, some in the morning and some early in the evening. Saturday programs will be held in Mesa and west Phoenix. The cost for MAPS is \$50. This covers program materials, activities, and refreshments. For more information or to reserve your spot, please contact Jennifer Westlund, MSW at (602) 239-6902 or Jennifer.westlund@bannerhealth.com.

Service of the Month

A recent study, "Research on Creativity and Aging: The positive Impact of Art on Health and Illness" reported that participation in the arts results in increased creative expression, enhanced sense of control, positive influences of the mind on the body, increased social engagement and perhaps better brain function (*American Society on Aging, Spring 2006*). Banner Alzheimer's Institute, in partnership with Maricopa Partnership for Arts and Culture, the Phoenix Symphony, the Phoenix Art Museum, and Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, is enrolling participants into a study to determine whether attending events in the arts community has an impact on the quality of life of Alzheimer's patients and their care partners.

The study is open to individuals who have been diagnosed in the early to moderate stages of Alzheimer's disease, and their care partners. Participants will attend either Phoenix Symphony concerts or events at the Phoenix Art Museum and

Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art. They will be asked to participate in interviews and tests by Banner Alzheimer's Institute staff who will measure the program's impact on patients' cognitive daily functioning, and quality of life indicators for both patients and care partners.

For more information or to enroll in the study, please contact Vicki McAllister, Arts Engagement Program coordinator at (602) 239-6928.



Jan Dougherty, director of Family and Community Services (left), Vicki McAllister, coordinator of the Arts Engagement Program (middle), and Kristi McMillan, assistant curator for education at the Phoenix Art Museum, have high hopes for the pilot study.

“Ask a Doc”

Dear BAI Doc: My husband takes a lot of medicines. I want him to be responsible for taking them but he is beginning to make mistakes. How can I get him to do a better job?

-- “Unmedicated”



Dr. Pierre Tariot

Dear Unmedicated:

Taking medications is complicated. Patients have to sort through bottles of medications, get the right tablets at the right time, adhere to the right dosing factors such as taking them with food.

When a patient takes more than one medication multiple times a day, the potential for errors is huge. In addition, people with Alzheimer’s disease may forget to take their medications or might take extra doses. To add to the problem, the person may be taking over-

the-counter medications or dietary supplements that interact with the medications, causing confusion.

Early in the disease, some steps can avert potential medication mistakes. Find out if any prescriptions can be eliminated. Ask about consolidating as many as possible into a single dose that can be given once a day. Obtain a dated pillbox for your husband and fill it for him. Then monitor whether the medications are taken appropriately. For people who live alone there are electronic medication dispensers that can notify them to take their medications and contact help if incorrect doses are dispensed.

When individuals struggle to manage a dated pillbox, it is time for them to have assistance taking the medications. Administering your husband’s medications will assure he receives them correctly.

Dr. Tariot is the director of the Memory Disorders Center at the Banner Alzheimer’s Institute.

February, the Month for Love

“We do it for love” is a motto developed for caregivers of people with dementia by Mark Warner, founder of Ageless Design. The motto was used to help legislators understand why a family would undertake the often challenging and frustrating role of caregiving to someone with dementia.

Now, when the word “love” is used as casually as a greeting with friends, we would like to stop and reflect on what it means when caring for a person with dementia.

Love is.....

- Not correcting a story or statement you know to be wrong
- Apologizing when your loved one is upset but you’ve done nothing wrong
- Taking the car or the checkbook, or moving your loved one, rather than letting terrible accidents or errors happen
- Encouraging your loved one to talk about frustrations and listening with your heart, rather than trying to explain, correct, or fix it
- Learning to communicate with your actions rather than words
- Choosing which battles to die on the beach for, and forgetting others
- Finding things for your person to do when neither of you has the energy
- Performing intimate or personal care
- Losing sleep when the person is up at night
- Understanding when the person does not recognize you
- Listening to criticisms and suggestions from people who do not provide care
- Seeking help from professionals as problems arise

Caregiving is love made visible. In providing respectful support, yet not necessarily allowing the person everything he or she desires, you are expressing your love in a real and tangible way – even when no one else understands.

You can probably list a dozen other things that indicate the depth of your love for your person with dementia. Why not write them down in your caregiving journal each February and record each time your person, family, or friends provide positive feedback.

This will remind you of the positive aspects of care and the depth of your love made visible. You do it for love and we notice.

Our Mission

To end Alzheimer’s disease without losing a generation, to set a new standard of care for patients and their families, and to forge a model of collaboration in biomedical research.