

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - More than 35 million people globally will suffer from Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia in 2010, and few will get any treatment at all, according to a report released on Monday.

HEALTH

The problem is worsening especially fast in low- and middle-income countries, where there are few facilities to diagnose or help dementia patients, Alzheimer's Disease International, an umbrella group for Alzheimer's associations globally, said.

"This report and all earlier studies indicate that the current number of people living with dementia is expected to grow at an alarming rate," the report reads.

"An estimated 35.6 million people worldwide will be living with dementia in 2010. This number is estimated to nearly double every 20 years, to 65.7 million in 2030, and 115.4 million in 2050," the report adds.

"Much of the increase is clearly attributable to increases in the numbers of people with dementia in low and middle income countries."

There are few treatments for Alzheimer's, the most common cause of dementia, and other forms such as vascular dementia, caused by clogged arteries in the brain.

Drugs can relieve some of the symptoms for a while, but patients lose

their memories, ability to navigate and understand the world, and to care for themselves. There is no cure.

"Dementia care costs are rising fast in low and middle income countries," the report adds.

It cites a 2005 study from Sweden's Karolinska Institute that estimated dementia cost global economies \$315 billion a year, \$227 billion for rich countries and \$88 billion for low- and middle-income countries.

It recommends that:

- * National governments should declare dementia a health priority and develop national strategies to provide services.

- * Low and medium income countries should create dementia strategies based first on enhancing primary healthcare and other community services.

- * High income countries should develop national dementia action plans with designated resource allocations.

Countries should develop services that reflect the progressive nature of dementia.

(Editing by [Cynthia Osterman](#))