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Media Announcement

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Early detection of Alzheimer's disease enables caregivers to significantly delay admission of their loved ones to nursing homes

- New study published in The Gerontologist finds caregivers can support patients with early signs of dementia significantly longer at home, instead of placing patients in assisted living facilities, when provided with counselling support services.
- Delaying or preventing patients from entering assisted living can save up to \$41,000 per patient per year.
- Primary care physicians need better tools to diagnose early signs of cognitive decline to allow caregivers to access services and reap financial benefits for healthcare system.
- Cogstate has developed COGNIGRAM™ to assist physicians in the detection and monitoring of cognitive impairment associated with dementia.

NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT: Providing counselling services to the caregivers of patients with Alzheimer's disease can delay or prevent patients from entering a long-term care facility, such as a nursing home, and reduce private and public health costs, according to a new journal report.

A research team based in the School of Nursing & Center for Aging at the University of Minnesota found that adult children could significantly delay the institutionalization of their parents with Alzheimer's disease or a related-dementia if they were supported with emotional and social services. Importantly, this benefit was achieved without incurring distress or negative mental health effects for the caregiver.

Delaying or preventing admission to a long-term residential care program can save up to \$41,000 per year per patient, according to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services data. Alzheimer's disease and similar dementia patients utilize residential care facilities at more than eight times the rate of patients without cognitive impairment.

Dr. Paul Maruff, Chief Scientific Officer of Cogstate, said identifying cognitive decline at an early stage would empower caregivers to access counselling and support services at the earliest possible stage and help them plan for the future.

"Preventing or delaying the number of patients suffering from Alzheimer's disease and other dementias from entering an assisted living facility will save money for the patient, their caregiver and ultimately the government," Dr Maruff said.

For caregivers to initiate access to support services, primary care physicians require the tools to accurately and sensitively quantify cognitive decline in its earliest stages. The patient should meet a certain benchmark for cognitive decline that is highly specific and sensitive to Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

COGNIGRAM™ is a web-based system that provides a brief, standardized, valid assessment of cognitive function to assist physicians in the detection and monitoring of subtle cognitive change over time. COGNIGRAM™ has been validated to assess subtle cognitive impairment and monitor cognitive change associated with mild cognitive impairment or dementia. COGNIGRAM™ utilizes the Cogstate Brief Battery, a computerized cognitive assessment scientifically developed to assess change using simple visual stimuli in four critical cognitive domains: psychomotor function, attention, learning and memory, as well as working memory. The Cogstate Brief Battery is supported by more than a decade of peer-reviewed research.

“Detecting Alzheimer's disease at its earliest stages has become the focus of scientific research as the best way to help treat the disease and give caregivers and family members the time to plan for the future,” Dr. Maruff said. “When cognitive impairment is identified, COGNIGRAM™ enables support services to be initiated.”

Dr. Maruff said the assessment also classifies cognitive impairment that may not yet warrant support services, but require tracking under a follow-up program.

“For example, a patient may show abnormal cognition that is not yet sufficient to qualify for support services, but that same patient can be retested in six months to ensure that support services are provided at the right time,” he said. “This also allows the physician to monitor the rate of change of cognitive function over time.”

Cogstate's technology has been used globally by pharmaceutical companies to quantify the effect of drugs or other interventions in people participating in clinical trials. COGNIGRAM™ was launched in Canada in 2012.

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About the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine whether the NYU Caregiver Intervention, adapted in Minnesota for adult child caregivers, prevented or delayed residential care placement for persons with dementia. The clinical trial design included 107 adult caregivers of persons with dementia who were randomly assigned to the treatment group or control group. Participants were asked to complete structured assessments for a minimum of 2 years.

Study results showed that two thirds (66%) of adult caregivers in the control condition admitted their parent to a residential care setting compared with 37% in the treatment

condition. Statistical analysis showed that the treatment group was significantly less likely ($p < .05$) to admit their parents to a residential care setting and delayed their parents' time to admission significantly longer (228.36 days longer on average) than those in the control group.

The implication of this study is that psychosocial support for caregivers allows them to continue providing care to cognitively impaired parents at home.

Study Citation: The Gerontologist Vol. 53, No. 6, 985–997 doi:10.1093/geront/gns193

About Cogstate

Cogstate Ltd (ASX: CGS) is a multi-faceted cognitive assessment and training company, focused on the development and commercialisation of rapid, computerised tests of cognition (brain function). It has three distinct business units:

Clinical Trials: In the clinical drug trial market, Cogstate technology and associated services are used by pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies to quantify the effect of drugs or other interventions on human subjects participating in clinical trials.

Concussion: In the area of sports related concussion, Cogstate's technology has been used by a number of highly regarded institutions and sporting organisations around the world for almost 10 years.

Healthcare: In the primary care or general practice setting, COGNIGRAM™ assesses cognition in patients and the reports generated on the basis of this assessment can allow physicians to identify subtle changes that could be indicative of the early stage of a neurodegenerative disease, such as Alzheimer's disease.