

Letter: New approach used on Alzheimer's

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Editor:

The number of Americans with Alzheimer's disease will grow each year as the proportion of the population age 65 and older continue to increase, according to the Alzheimer's Association. In recent years, greater understanding of the disease has led to a new, affirmative approach to Alzheimer's care.

The characteristics of this approach include an individualized approach to care; focusing on the individual's abilities, not their limitations; and helping people reconnect with who they were in order to confirm who they are.

This approach to care helps create a positive and caring environment where individuals can find meaning and purpose. Each person's individuality is respected, fostering a sense of self-worth and dignity. This enables them to recognize and build on their strengths rather than focusing on their weaknesses. Caregivers introduce meaningful interactions or activities that enable individuals to connect with and honor their past identities and to feel satisfaction with the people they have become.

The affirmative approach to care utilizes nondrug alternatives to respond to changes in memory. Families and caregivers support the activities of daily living to help increase functionality, provide cognitive training, enhance a sense of community and allow each person to continue sharing his life story.

This affirmative approach to care is a very healthy evolution in how we are caring for America's rapidly growing Alzheimer's population.

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Editor's note: Doug Walther is executive director of the Heritage of Green Hills in Cumru Township.