

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

April 10, 2001 LB 462

Legislature, one of the truly bad diseases that we, as baby boomers, are going to have to face if we've taken care of our bodies and live to be the ripe old age, will be Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's disease is a progressive, degenerative disease that attacks the brain and results in impaired memory, thinking and behavior. AD is the most common form of dementia. Approximately four million Americans have AD and this number is expected to double by the year 2030. Twenty thirty is only 29 years away. Currently, approximately 77,000 Nebraskans have AD, enough to fill Memorial Stadium in Lincoln. Nebraska ranks among the top four states in the percent of people age 85 years and older. In a 1993 national survey, 19 million Americans said they had a family member with AD, and 37 million said they knew someone with AD. One in ten persons over 65, and nearly half of those over 85, half over 85, have AD. A small percentage of people as young as in their thirties and forties get the disease. Fourteen million Americans will have AD in the middle of the next century unless a cure or a prevention is found. Right now, there is no cure and there isn't even a diagnostic test that we can use. A person with AD will live an average of eight years, and as many as 20 years or more, from the onset of the symptoms. AD is the third most expensive disease in the United States, after heart disease and cancer. A hundred billion dollars a year is being spent on AD. Neither Medicare nor most private health insurance covers the long-term care most patients need. Let me reiterate that. Neither Medicare nor most private health insurance covers the long-term care most patients need, so you're going to have to go on Medicaid or get long-term insurance, which will cost money, and Medicaid will cost all of us. The average lifetime cost per patient is \$174,000. More than seven of ten people with Alzheimer's disease live at home. Seventy percent live at home. Almost 75 percent of the home care is provided by family and friends. Senator Byars thinks that respite is an important issue in healthcare. I do too. I think it's harder on the people who care for Alzheimer's patients than it is on the patient to have Alzheimer's in the family. The paid care costs \$12,500 a year, and families almost always pay that out of pocket. There's interesting things about Alzheimer's. There's certain types of cells that they are looking at.