

## *FDA-Approved Alzheimer's Disease Treatments*

Several prescription drugs are currently approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to treat people who have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Most of these drugs work best for people in the early or middle stages of Alzheimer's. It is important to understand that none of these interventions cure the disease itself.

### **Treatment for Mild to Moderate Alzheimer's**

Medications called cholinesterase inhibitors are prescribed for mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease. These drugs may help reduce or control some cognitive and behavioral symptoms. Treating the symptoms of Alzheimer's can help provide people with comfort, dignity, and independence for a longer period of time and also assist their caregivers. The medications are Razadyne® (galantamine), Exelon® (rivastigmine), and Aricept® (donepezil).

Cholinesterase inhibitors prevent the breakdown of acetylcholine, a brain chemical believed to be important for memory and thinking. Because cholinesterase inhibitors work in a similar way, switching from one to another may not produce significantly different results, but a person living with Alzheimer's may respond better to one drug versus another. As Alzheimer's progresses, the brain produces less and less acetylcholine; therefore, cholinesterase inhibitors may eventually lose their effect.

Immunotherapy drugs are used to treat early Alzheimer's disease. These medications are called disease modifying treatments because they work by targeting and clearing beta-amyloid plaques from the brain. Leqembi® (lecanemab) is the first disease modifying treatment to receive full FDA approval. It is approved for use by those with Mild Cognitive impairment (MCI) or early Alzheimer's disease who also have evidence of amyloid buildup as confirmed by an imaging scan. Study results showed Leqembi® slowed the rate of cognitive decline by 27% among study participants over the course of 18 months and reduced levels of amyloid in the brain.

Kisunla™ (donanemab) is also approved for the treatment of those with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or early-stage Alzheimer's disease and confirmed amyloid plaques in the brain. Study results showed Kisunla™ reduced cognitive and functional decline by 35% as compared to those taking a placebo, and study data provided evidence to support stopping treatment once amyloid plaques were removed.

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# Alzheimer's New Jersey<sup>®</sup>

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### **Treatment for Moderate to Severe Alzheimer's**

A medication known as Namenda<sup>®</sup> (memantine), an N-methyl D-aspartate (NMDA) antagonist, is prescribed to treat moderate to severe Alzheimer's disease. This drug's main effect is to decrease symptoms, which could allow some people to maintain certain daily functions a little longer than they would without the medication. For example, Namenda<sup>®</sup> may help a person in the later stages of the disease maintain his or her ability to use the bathroom independently for several more months, a benefit for both the person with Alzheimer's and caregivers. Namenda<sup>®</sup> is believed to work by regulating glutamate, an important brain chemical. When produced in excessive amounts, glutamate may lead to brain cell death. Because NMDA antagonists work differently from cholinesterase inhibitors, the two types of drugs can be prescribed in combination.

The FDA has also approved **Aricept<sup>®</sup>**, the **Exelon<sup>®</sup>** patch, and **Namzaric<sup>®</sup>**, a combination of **Namenda<sup>®</sup>** and **Aricept<sup>®</sup>**, for the treatment of moderate to severe Alzheimer's disease.

### **Other FDA-Approved Medications**

Rexulti<sup>®</sup> (brexpiprazole) is an atypical antipsychotic that has been approved to treat agitation associated with Alzheimer's.