



## Weekly Checkup

# The Costly Future of Dementia Care

JOHN WALKER | JANUARY 17, 2025

Health journal [Nature Medicine](#) this week published the results of a new study that concluded the lifetime risk of developing dementia after the age of 55 is 42 percent - compared to the previous but less representative estimate of 33 percent for males between 65 and 100 - **suggesting that the number of Americans who develop dementia each year will double from roughly 500,000 in 2020 to approximately 1 million by 2060.** As the U.S. [median age](#) and [overall life expectancy](#) continue to increase, this growing number of adults with dementia will impose greater burdens on the U.S. health care system. Beyond the health considerations, **let's discuss the future financial implications presented by this new study.**

Long-term dementia care is considerably more expensive than many other forms of care: The average total lifetime cost of care for a patient with dementia is roughly [\\$415,936](#), nearly double that of patients receiving other types of care. What's more, **the cost of dementia care is considerably higher than other forms of elderly patient care because dementia patients often require near round-the-clock attention and can live, on average, three to 10 years following a diagnosis.** Roughly [70 percent](#) (north of \$290,000) of the total cost of dementia care is currently absorbed by family caregivers through unpaid caregiving and out-of-pocket expenses such as home health support and medications.

Yet while family caregivers currently absorb a significant portion of dementia care costs, their ability to do so will likely diminish as the U.S. median age increases. Based on current [Census Data](#), the United States' median age is between 38.9 and 39.3 years, but is expected to reach around 53.6 by 2060. In other words, **the future will feature a United States with more old people - and a greater proportion of them - facing a higher rate of dementia than previously anticipated.** All told, by 2060, the United States is estimated to have approximately [12 million dementia cases](#). And, **as the number of Americans with dementia increases, there will be fewer family caregivers around to take care of**

**them. As a result, many of these dementia patients will be forced to turn to Medicare and Medicaid to offset the cost of their care, likely placing a considerable additional burden on programs that already are on an unsustainable and worsening fiscal path.**

**Three things can be taken from this new study on dementia: The future United States will be less young and less healthy - and its already strained health programs will have even less room to address these growing challenges.**