



the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

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**FRONTOTEMPORAL DEMENTIA INCLUDED IN
COMPASSIONATE ALLOWANCES INITIATIVE**
Alzheimer's Association Statement

Washington, D.C., October 27, 2008 – In its effort to improve the disability determination process and expedite the disability claim process, the Social Security Administration has announced it will include frontotemporal dementia (FTD) in its Compassionate Allowance Initiative for Social Security benefits eligibility. The Compassionate Allowance Initiative is a recognized class of at least 50 medical conditions and diseases that are severely debilitating and/or life threatening that prevent individuals from being able to work for at least 12 months. The Alzheimer's Association® applauds the Social Security Administration for recognizing individuals with diminished cognitive impairment can quickly reach a point where they can no longer maintain gainful employment and deserve a prompt disability determination.

The Social Security Administration's effort to expand the qualification for disability benefits to include those with FTD is a significant landmark in addressing those who have dementia related illnesses. FTD is a degenerative, fatal disease that affects "executive functions" such as reasoning, social behavior, speech, language and movement. The disease progresses steadily and often rapidly, ranging from less than two years in some individuals to more than 10 years in others.

The inclusion of FTD is a tremendous first step to ensuring the cognitively impaired, who face very real challenges meeting workforce demands, do not also have to endure the uncertainty of an extended wait for a disability determination and its associated unnecessary, emotionally and financially draining effects. An evolving program, the Compassionate Allowances Initiative will include more diseases and conditions over time.

More than 5 million Americans today have dementia related illnesses, including FTD and Alzheimer's disease. While treatments exist for some of the symptoms of these diseases, there are currently no effective disease-modifying treatments that slow or stop the progression of either FTD or Alzheimer's disease. The Social Security Administration's proactive efforts to "fast track" certain conditions will work to reduce the backlog of disability claims and more importantly ensure those claims that fall under the Compassionate Allowance Initiative will be decided within days instead of years. As the Social Security Administration continues to add more diseases and conditions over time, the Alzheimer's Association remains committed to working with the agency to ensure the needs of individuals with dementia related illnesses continues to be considered, evaluated and included in the Compassionate Allowance Initiative.

The Alzheimer's Association

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's. For more information, visit www.alz.org.

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