

What You and I Can Do to Help Cure Alzheimer's Disease

By Dan Otter - Keep Memory Alive Board Member



Dan Otter pauses in front of the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health after the 114-mile Viva Las Vegas RTC Century Ride

“I am too old to go back to school to become an AD researcher, so I have to give what I can so that my children will never know AD. ”

I have been involved with the development of Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health for several years. As a Keep Memory Alive board member and friend of founder Larry Ruvo, I have played a small part by contributing my time, talent and treasure to the cause. Today, I am thrilled the center has treated hundreds of people with Alzheimer's disease (AD)

When I celebrated my 50th birthday this year, I realized there was something I still needed to do: participate in a clinical trial designed to advance our knowledge of AD while my brain was still healthy.

Why Clinical Trials Are Important to Me

I was the primary caretaker for my mother, who died in 2005 at the age of 79 after battling AD for several years. After her death, I went through her files and discovered my father's death certificate from 1972 stating the cause of his death as AD. He was only 69. My father's brother and sister also succumbed to AD.

My wife and I have three children aged 10 to 14. My strong family history of AD puts me and my three children at higher risk of getting the disease ourselves. I don't want my children to know AD. I want them to think of AD the same way my generation thought of polio — as a disease that is no longer a concern.

Doing Our Part

I am too old to go back to school to become an AD researcher, but I can help rid the world of this mind-robbing disease by participating in a clinical trial. Clinical trials are the pathway to a cure for Alzheimer's, and you and I hold the keys to helping researchers achieve this goal.

The Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health is conducting several trials of new drugs for Alzheimer's, and will be investigating an AD vaccine this year. Many volunteers are needed for these studies. I encourage you to become part of the army battling this disease by enrolling in a clinical trial. Information on the clinical trials currently available at the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health can be found at the end of the article entitled, **“Striding Ahead to Keep Memory Alive”** on page 7.

Most clinical trials require blood samples and MR, CT or PET scans. Some require spinal fluid be extracted by lumbar puncture (spinal tap). I have had a spinal tap and can verify the discomfort is nothing more than a little sting lasting a few seconds, similar to a Novocain injection given by a dentist. The more spinal fluid samples researchers have, the more quickly a cure may be found. Don't let fear of a painless lumbar puncture to deter you from participating in critically important research.

About the Author:

Dan Otter is a Keep Memory Alive board member and commercial real estate developer. He lives in Las Vegas with his wife, Victoria, and their children Danielle, Christian and Katie. He looks forward to participating in new studies at Cleveland Clinic.

Otter family: L to R: Christian, Victoria, Katie, Dan, Danielle

