



THE MEMORY CARE OPPORTUNITY: DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN TRENDS



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THE MEMORY CARE OPPORTUNITY

Memory care is undoubtedly a hot market within the senior living industry.

Given that an estimated 5.4 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease in 2016—the vast majority of whom are age 65 and older, according to the Alzheimer's Association—the need for memory support services is evident. With the “silver tsunami” on the horizon and an inevitable increase in the number of cases of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia in the coming years, as well, demand for memory care is set to skyrocket.

“On the overall national platform, I don't think there will ever be enough memory care development to cover what's really coming down the pike,” says Paul Mullin, senior vice president of development at Silverado, one of the nation's leading operators of standalone memory care communities.

The memory care opportunity is tremendous, to be sure. But to develop and operate effectively, there are several critical considerations to be made. Those include understanding the marketplace, as well as the residents at hand, and recognizing trends to construct and maintain memory care communities.

Gone are the days of institutional care settings for those living with cognitive impairment. Instead, developers and operators are poised to be on the cutting-edge of accommodating memory care residents, implementing new development plans at rapid pace and designing with Alzheimer's in mind.

Barring a tremendous medical breakthrough, memory care will remain relevant and necessary well into the future. When newcomers and veterans alike keep a finger on the pulse of memory care design and development, success is sure to follow.

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- Paul Mullin

Senior VP of Development at Silverado



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UNDERSTANDING COGNITIVE DECLINE

It might seem obvious, but it's crucial to understand the basics of memory impairment, first and foremost. Developing and designing to accommodate cognitive decline requires at the very least a general familiarity with the diseases that drive residents to memory care settings.

What is Alzheimer's disease?

Alzheimer's is a degenerative brain disease and is the most common cause of dementia. Dementia is marked by a decline in memory, language and other cognitive skills that affect a person's day-to-day life. Alzheimer's was first identified more than 100 years ago, but it wasn't recognized as the most common cause of dementia and as a major cause of death until decades later.

What causes dementia?

Alzheimer's is the leading cause of dementia, but dementia results from various health incidents as well. Vascular dementia, for example, accounts for 10% of dementia cases and occurs due to blood vessel blockages that lead to strokes or bleeding in the brain. Dementia with Lewy bodies is another form; Lewy bodies are abnormal clumps of the protein alpha-synuclein in neurons. When they develop in the cortex of the brain, dementia can occur. Other types of dementia include, but are not limited to:

- Mixed dementia, marked by abnormalities of more than one cause of dementia, most commonly Alzheimer's combined with vascular dementia
- Frontotemporal lobar degeneration
- Parkinson's disease dementia
- Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease
- Normal pressure hydrocephalus

Who is susceptible to Alzheimer's and dementia?

Experts believe Alzheimer's develops as a result of many factors, as opposed to a single cause. The greatest risk factors are older age, family history and carrying the APOE-e4 gene, which provides the scheme for a protein that transports cholesterol in the bloodstream, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

Everyone inherits one of three forms of the APOE gene—e2, e3 or e4—from each parent, and the e4 form increases the risk of developing Alzheimer's. One modifiable risk factor is cardiovascular health. Education and social and cognitive engagement also support mental wellness.

What are the symptoms?

Alzheimer's disease symptoms vary, but the following are common among those with the disease:

- Memory loss that hinders daily life
- Trouble planning or solving problems
- Confusion with time or place
- Difficulty understanding visual images and spatial relationships
- Withdrawal from work or social activities
- Misplacing items and losing the ability to retrace steps
- Decreased or poor judgment
- Changes in mood and personality, such as apathy and depression
- Increased anxiety, agitation and sleep disturbances

What's the difference between incidence and prevalence?

Prevalence of Alzheimer's disease refers to the existing cases in a population at a given time. Meanwhile, incidence denotes new cases that develop in a certain period of time in a specific population. As such, approximately 476,000 people age 65 or older will develop Alzheimer's disease in the United States in 2016, according to the Alzheimer's Association. Predictions indicate that by mid-century, someone in the U.S. will develop the disease every 33 seconds.

