

Church, as it was known, soon began offering daily hot meals and social programs. In the late-1970s, it also began offering limited care to frail seniors, pioneering what became Milwaukee's first adult day care. The church's leaders also forged a statewide adult day-care association to share experiences. The success of that cooperation led several local agencies to join in requesting a \$300,000 grant. Winning the grant enabled The Village Church to open in the mid-1980s the state's first facility for people with dementia.

In that era, what is now called the Sinai-Samaritan Medical Complex also developed one of the nation's first interdisciplinary teams of doctors, nurses and social workers to work with geriatric patients.

Meanwhile, families caring for patients with Alzheimer's formed a Milwaukee-area association to share information about the disease. A small grant enabled them to hire Barbara Keyes, a geriatric nurse at Mount Sinai Hospital, as their first director. Today, the Southeastern Wisconsin Alzheimer's Association is the seventh largest chapter in the country, largely because of a 1985 grant from the state Legislature making it the statewide Alzheimer's Information and Training Center. And Keyes, in January, was named the first director of the new Bader Center.

Also in 1980, Piero Antuono, an Italian neurologist, came to Milwaukee to meet his wife's family, who live in West Allis. During that visit he stopped in to talk with neurologists at the Medical College of Wisconsin about his interest in patients with dementia. In 1985, he returned to open the first dementia clinic, housed in Froedtert Memorial Lutheran Hospital.

Antuono also set up a brain bank, which now preserves the brain tissue of 270 Alzheimer's victims, making it one of the largest in the country. This brain tissue is essential to research, since only by examining brain tissue in an autopsy can Alzheimer's be confirmed. Having the disease confirmed is especially important to families, since there is evidence pointing to a genetic link in some Alzheimer's cases. Antuono looks forward to the day when people from families prone to Alzheimer's can be treated while still in their 30s, to curb the onset of the disease.

Meanwhile, social workers and nurses on the clinic's staff work closely with families tailoring changes in care as the patient's disease progresses. The challenge of Alzheimer's disease is to keep modifying care, explained Antuono. The clinic often devotes more time to care givers than the patient, easing the strain so that patients can stay at home as long as possible.

**I**T HAS been just 18 years since researchers realized that some older people experiencing a loss of memory had the same chemical changes in their brain that had first been pinpointed in 1907 by Dr. Alois Alzheimer, who thought he'd found a rare disease that struck only

younger adults.

What researchers finally realized in 1975 is that the loss of memory is not an inevitable sign of aging. Much memory loss is caused by Alzheimer's disease, which is diagnosed on autopsy by telltale plaques and tangles in the area of the brain controlling memory.

Medicines like Tacrine are now available and in some cases can reduce memory loss temporarily. But researchers estimate they are still years away from a major breakthrough that will cure Alzheimer's, which now affects 10% of all those 65 and older and 47% of those 85 and older.

Research into Alzheimer's was largely ignored until the late 1970s. But interest has intensified. At the forefront currently are researchers Allen Roses and Warren Strittmatter, whose lab at the Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C., has found evidence linking Alzheimer's disease to an inherited form of protein.

Roses came to Milwaukee in January to talk directly to the board of the Bader Foundation. His preliminary evidence indicates that a protein within nerve cells in the brain of Alzheimer's victims sets off a series of chemical reactions producing a loss of memory and ultimate death. If further research proves those findings are accurate, there may one day be a drug that shields the brain from the destruction of Alzheimer's disease.

Just last year, the same Duke researchers shook the research community by finding a genetic link between Alzheimer's and the protein that carries cholesterol through the blood. Families who inherit the protein, known as ApoE, face a much higher risk of developing Alzheimer's, according to Rose's research.

This January, the Bader Foundation gave Roses \$100,000 to continue his research.

The grant is typical of the foundation's efforts to further top research on Alzheimer's, according to Robin Mayrl, who directs the foundation's Alzheimer's grants. In addition, the foundation helps support Alzheimer's conferences where the latest information can be exchanged.

The foundation knows it can't create changes all across the country, she explained. So it has focused on Milwaukee.

The foundation spends much of its time looking for gaps in the services that are needed as the disease progresses and patients need different care, Mayrl said. But the foundation also looks for ways of changing the legal, financial and health fields to improve understanding of dementia.

"For me, the worst thing is to go into hospitals and find doctors and nurses who don't know how to handle a person with dementia," Mayrl said. "Those patients lose so much ground if they're put on medications that keep them from interacting, just because staff can't handle their care."

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