

Alzheimer's program will aid families

By Wayne Peal
Staff writer

It's a way to bring health care professionals and family members together to discuss America's fourth-leading adult killer.

But members of the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Association, Southfield, hope their upcoming family care training workshop also raises public awareness about the disease.

"Of all the terminal diseases I've worked with, none has the potential for driving families apart as does Alzheimer's Disease," said program

coordinator Marjorie Fuller. "A lot of people just can't cope."

Alzheimer's claims an estimated 100,000 lives annually, according to the association. For most victims, it's a lingering death, requiring extraordinary patience and care on the part of family members. For families, the strain is great.

THE TRAINING session on Friday, Nov. 6, at Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, will teach family members how to cope, Fuller said.

"It's really the first time we've brought professionals and family members together," she said. "In the

past we've had separate sessions."

The free workshop runs from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. It is financed by the Michigan Department of Mental Health.

Workshop speakers include Catherine Upton, a geriatric specialist on the Beaumont staff; attorney Richard Bloom of Southfield; and Dan Wilkins, executive director of the association's Detroit chapter.

A RECENT state task force predicted Alzheimer's Disease would become one of Michigan's major health issues in the next four decades.

An estimated 120,000 Michigan residents will be afflicted by 1990, the report said. That number is expected to triple by the year 2030.

Family member care is important, Fuller said, because most Alzheimer's patients respond better to treatment at home than in nursing facilities.

But home care can be draining both financially and emotionally, she said.

"There are simple ways we show caregivers to help make their lives easier," Fuller said.

ing Lansing legislators for new laws to help ease families' burden.

Securing state financial support is a key goal.

"We don't feel families should be driven into poverty," Fuller said.

But the association's legislative agenda also includes items ranging from new recertification standards for nursing homes to state-supported autopsies for Alzheimer's fatalities.

Autopsies, medical experts agree, provide the best opportunity to learn

about Alzheimer's and its effects.

Though many Alzheimer-related deaths go unrecorded, association members said, the disease ranks behind heart disease, cancer and strokes as a killer of adults.

Family members are the real experts, Fuller said.

"I became involved when my own mother was stricken with Alzheimer's Disease," she said. "There's a feeling that you're out there all alone, we try to help."

THE ASSOCIATION is also lobby-

High schoolers visit OU campus

Some 1,500 Michigan high school students and parents will be on Oakland University's Rochester campus as guests Sunday for the 22nd annual open house and scholarship competition.

The students will learn about more than 70 academic programs.

Seniors can compete for academic scholarships valued at \$4,000 to \$6,000 each. Juniors and seniors may attend the open house, but only seniors may register for the competitive scholarship examination.

The program will be held from 12:30 to 5 p.m. starting in the Lepley Sports Center and then switching to the Oakland Center. University faculty and financial aid personnel will be on hand to answer questions.

Campus tours will be provided, and OU students will be present to share their college experiences.

Students must preregister for the program by obtaining an invitation from their high school guidance offices or by contacting the OU Admissions Office at 370-3364.

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