



Reaching Florida's Dementia Caregivers with the News that Help Is Available—by Phone and Online

Development of a strategic marketing plan for the Dementia Caregivers Telehealth Support Project

SUMMARY

The [Department of Clinical and Health Psychology](#) at the University of Florida's College of Health Professions developed and implemented a strategic marketing plan for AlzOnline—formerly called the Dementia Caregivers Telehealth Support Project.

Based on caregiver comments, AlzOnline added Expert Forums to the website—telephone conferences that bring caregivers, area service providers and experts in the field of dementia together to participate in roundtable discussions on various caregiving issues.

Key Results

- From October 2001 to March 2002:
 - The number of AlzOnline users each month increased from 250 to 1,957.
 - The number of pages accessed per month increased from 1,882 to 10,857.
 - Calls and e-mails reached a combined total of 500 per month.
- AlzOnline is also available in Spanish.

Funding

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) provided a \$49,897 one-year grant in April 2001.

THE PROBLEM

Florida's Department of Elder Affairs has described the high prevalence of Alzheimer's disease and related conditions as "Florida's epidemic." The state of Florida currently sponsors model day care programs, memory disorder clinics and several respite service

programs, but caregivers are often unaware of these programs or have difficulty accessing them.

CONTEXT

AlzOnline grew out of the Dementia Caregivers Telehealth Support Project. It was launched in August 2000 with funding from the University of Florida's College of the Health Professions' Center for Research on Telehealth & Healthcare Communications and the Florida Department of Elder Affairs. AlzOnline gives people caring for dementia patients Internet and toll-free telephone access to education, information and support through a [website](#), and toll-free telephone number, 1-866-260-2466. (See the [Appendix](#) for details about the website).

The strategic marketing plan funded by RWJF aimed to help to introduce AlzOnline to caregivers. Project staff convened a small working group comprised of statewide leaders from the Department of Elder Affairs, senior and Alzheimer service organizations and caregivers, in July 2001. The group produced a plan in four parts to:

- Educate groups who can influence caregivers such as community agencies, providers and service organizations, about the benefits and services of AlzOnline.
- Develop a campaign using mass media channels such as television and newspapers to increase public awareness and use of AlzOnline.
- Familiarize caregivers with the expertise of AlzOnline staff in Web-based training and support of caregivers by having staff speak at and participate in local, regional and statewide caregiver meetings.
- Partner with a pharmaceutical company to educate physicians and pharmacies about the caregiver resources available at AlzOnline. (Project staff did not achieve this part of the plan during the course of the grant.)

THE PROJECT

- To enhance name recognition, the project name was changed to Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Online (AlzOnline).
- Under a subcontract, a marketing firm, the Wilson Agency, helped to develop a brochure, a CD illustrating AlzOnline features, promotional items, media kits and a large display.
- In September 2001, the promotion of AlzOnline began, through staff presentations to national and regional conferences and to local and regional caregiver forums.

- In October 2001, AlzOnline staff began an initial campaign rollout focusing some components on metropolitan Jacksonville and surroundings to assess which marketing techniques were most effective.
 - AlzOnline staff mailed media kits to all 11 statewide Area Agencies on Aging, 10 Alzheimer's Association chapters, 13 memory disorder clinics, 61 print media outlets and 10 television stations in northern and north central Florida (covering the Jacksonville area), and followed up with telephone calls.
 - Data from Jacksonville suggested print media as most productive in bringing caregivers to AlzOnline. The campaign, concentrating on community newspapers and senior magazines, expanded statewide in November 2001.
- Based on caregiver comments, AlzOnline added Expert Forums to the website—telephone conferences that bring caregivers, area service providers and experts in the field of dementia together to participate in roundtable discussions on various caregiving issues.

RESULTS

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APPENDIX

Basic Site Map: AlzOnline

(Current as of the end date of the program; provided by the program's management; not verified by RWJF.)

Home

Free Positive Caregiving Classes

Expert Forum

En Español

Caregiver Support

- Getting Started
- About Our Classes
- Class Schedule
- Enter live Class
- Class Activities
- Pre-Recorded Classes
- Message Board
- Computer Questions

Resource Center

- Library
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Message Board
- Helpful Links and Referrals
- Expert Forum

About Us

- Information about who supports and produces the site, and who facilitates classes
- Toll-free number
- Find out more about our staff
- University of Florida Center for Research on Telehealth and Healthcare Communications

Contact Us

- Toll-free number
- info@AlzOnline.net

Web Tour

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Current as of date of the report; as provided by the grantee organization; not verified by RWJF; items not available from RWJF.)

Survey Instruments

"AlzOnline Users Survey." Center for Research on Telehealth and Healthcare Communications, fielded [online](#) from March 2002 to date.

Audio-Visuals and Computer Software

AlzOnline Webtour, an instructional CD designed to introduce the support services available on the [website](#). Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Center for Telehealth and Healthcare Communications, 2001.

Grantee Websites

<http://alzonline.php.ufl.edu>. A website devoted to providing Web- and telephone-based education and support to caregivers of dementia patients (see the [Appendix](#) for a basic site map). Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Center for Telehealth and Healthcare Communications, 2000.