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FOREWORD

Interest in dementia, especially that resulting from Alzheimer's disease, has increased markedly in the past decade. Such interest has led to significant increases in the number of systematic studies of the pathophysiological and neuropsychological deficits of dementia and in the number of television movies and programs whose characters or stories depict its effects on the minds and families of those affected. Thus, the progressive deterioration in memory, attention, reasoning, judgment, and personality that result from dementia has become more familiar to both health care professionals and TV viewers. Indeed, Alzheimer's disease has become a label commonly applied to anyone who appears to act demented.

If the tide of dementia continues to rise unabated, many of us who live beyond age 65 will likely see friends or family members, or ourselves, gradually fall victim. Because the U.S. population is becoming increasingly older, the financial costs of dementia are expected to triple within the next half-century; increases in its human costs, of course, are immeasurable. And in spite of recent research into the causes of the anatomic and neurochemical changes that accompany Alzheimer's disease, medical science has yet to discover how to prevent or delay the onset of dementia or to significantly slow its inexorable progression. Little can be done at present except to help those who provide care for affected family members or patients.

I believe that this topic is so important that two issues of *Seminars in Speech and Language* will be devoted to caregiving in dementia. The guest editor for both issues is Michelle Bourgeois of the Center for Social and Urban Research at the University of Pittsburgh. For this first issue, Dr. Bourgeois has assembled a multidisciplinary team of clinicians and researchers with a reservoir of information about caregivers and how their caregiving experiences have affected them and the care they provide. As a result, the information presented in this issue has many practical implications for those of you having clients or family members with dementia.

Richard F. Curlee, Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief