



News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Holds Compassionate Allowances Hearing on Early-Onset Alzheimer's Disease

Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security, today hosted the agency's fourth public hearing on Compassionate Allowances. Commissioner Astrue was joined by Marie A. Bernard, M.D., Deputy Director of the National Institute on Aging, National Institutes of Health, and other Social Security officials. They heard testimony from some of the nation's leading experts on early-onset Alzheimer's disease and related dementias about possible methods for identifying and implementing Compassionate Allowances for people with early-onset Alzheimer's.

"This year, through Compassionate Allowances and our Quick Disability Determination process, over 100,000 Americans with severe disabilities will be approved for Social Security disability benefits in a matter of days rather than the months and years it can sometimes take," said Commissioner Astrue. "We are now looking to add more diseases and impairments to these expedited processes. With today's hearing, we are expanding our focus from specific rare diseases and cancers to look at subgroups of much broader conditions. Early-onset Alzheimer's disease is a rapidly progressive and debilitating disease of the brain that affects individuals between the ages of 50 and 65 and clearly deserves our consideration."

In October 2008, Social Security launched Compassionate Allowances to expedite the processing of disability claims for applicants with medical conditions so severe that their conditions by definition meet Social Security's standards. To learn more and to view a web cast of today's hearing, go to www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances.

"With the aging of the baby-boomers, we are beginning to see more, younger working Americans diagnosed with this devastating disease," Commissioner Astrue said. "I want to thank the Alzheimer's Association and their staff, particularly Harry Johns, President and CEO. Their help has been invaluable and many of the witnesses are here at their suggestion. Together, we hope to identify the most severe cases that can be included in our Compassionate Allowances process."

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