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The evening that my mother and I visited the doctor for the evaluation that would help determine why she is having issues with her memory was one that took us on a long journey of complications and frustration.

A diagnosis of Alzheimer's for many families like my own is not just difficult but it drastically changes the way in which we live our lives. Families and people with Alzheimer's are given a diagnosis and no one takes the time to follow up with them. When my mother was diagnosed there was no support or suggestions of places where I could go get services. We are not even talking about how complicated the process to obtain a diagnosis is in the first place. Latinos families face many obstacles including a lack of culturally appropriate services and a language barrier that even with the use of an interpreter causes confusion.

Families are left to navigate a complicated health care system by themselves. Without a clear way to obtain a diagnosis and no follow up with medical professionals post diagnosis. Medical professionals do not spend time discussing options and the next step to take after receiving a diagnosis. After a long process of phone calls, cancelled appointments and health insurance battles caregivers are left with diagnosis and millions of unanswered questions.

Today we ask that the health care system pay attention to the needs of people with Alzheimer's and dementia. There are health professionals that are working towards improving the diagnostic process for people with Alzheimer's. One of the areas in which we need improvement is care management. When a mother goes to a hospital to deliver they are given many services. They are educated on prevalent issues, nurses provide at home services and medical professionals follow up with them after delivery. Alzheimer's patients should receive services comparable to those already given to many other patients in the healthcare system.

People with Alzheimer's and caregivers deserve a system that works for them. So today I stand here because I have experienced the frustration, I have battled with the system and I am ready for a change. Thank you.