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### Objectives:

Dementia is a challenge to the world's health systems creating many issues for the persons with dementia and the family care-givers.

One major problem is Stigma which the carers widely experience. They feel ashamed at the behavior of their loved ones and the judgment of others. The feeling of social exclusion and marginalization hinders carers to seek support. The Iranian studies and the experiences of Iran Alzheimer Association indicate that despite execution of many projects, stigma still exists strongly among the Iranian carers. It is felt that only by involving PWD and their carers, awareness can be raised among the general public and officials, dispelling myths to reduce stigma in the community. It is with this goal in mind that IAA organized an event for World Alzheimer's Day titled "Balloons Speak Out".

### Methods:

The plan was presented to the Tehran Municipality. After a few sessions, it was finalized for operation. The next step was to convince the carers to speak out in the event. The occasion was promoted in the media, by text messages and by posting translated Alzheimer's disease International's 2014 poster throughout different centers. On World Alzheimer's Day, the event was held at 4 pm, in a park. People with dementia and their carers, invited guests and the general public took part in a unique event.

### Results:

More than four hundred people participated and were informed about the disease and its challenges. Fifty carers held placards for the first time requesting their needs and one took the podium to address their issues. An exhibition was held on the side, introducing IAA's activities, 2014 WAD poster with its informative messages of reducing risk factors. Brochures were handed out and IAA's staff answered the participants' queries. At the close of the event, ADI's balloons were distributed through the crowd with this year's key messages tied to them. They were released in the sky.

### Conclusion:

"Balloons Speak Out" was an awareness project targeting stigma and marking the World Alzheimer's Day with a public audience. Its accomplishment has been significant raising profile of IAA, sensitizing the media, creating a better understanding with government institutions and uniting the carers delivering their issues and requests to the Chairperson of the Parliamentary faction for the disabled persons. The Chairperson has taken the case forward, sending four letters to the Police Department, National TV channel, Health Ministry and Ministry of Labour. The breakthrough is: the Minister of Labour has just appointed a working group for dementia and Alzheimer's disease with the goal of prevention in the population. The group is now working on the statutes before initiating their mandate.

## Empowering carers in "Balloons speak out"