My father grew up in India. At the age of 22, he excitedly accepted an opportunity to continue his education at the University of Michigan. With $20 in his pocket, he traveled to the United States on a cargo ship, suffering from severe motion sickness throughout his journey. Through hard work, perseverance, and an adventurous spirit, he and my mother ultimately immigrated to America and were able to provide my brother and me with a middle class upbringing. At the time (1970s), I had little understanding of what it must have been like for them to raise two sons in a culture in which they had limited familiarity. I can remember my father driving an hour, struggling to find parking, and then sitting through a double-header baseball game between the Orioles and the Yankees, despite having little knowledge of the game. Over the subsequent years, my father endured the deaths of his son (at the age of 21) to a brain tumor, his older brother to Parkinson’s disease, and a younger brother to an acute stroke.

My father is now 85 years old and is one of the more than 5.7 million Americans suffering from Alzheimer disease. He has trouble formulating and expressing his thoughts and is completely dependent on my mother to direct his daily activities. At times, he is completely cognizant of his limitations and expresses his frustration with his mental deterioration and his progressive loss of control over his life.

In this issue of the Medical Clinics of North America, Dr Milligan and her colleagues discuss the impact, diagnosis, and treatments of neurologic diseases such as Alzheimer. Many (but not all) of the conditions discussed affect older individuals: our patients, our mothers, and our fathers. I hope that readers will find this issue to be
an invaluable resource in dealing with these common and debilitating disorders. I know I have.

Bimal H. Ashar, MD, MBA, FACP
Division of General Internal Medicine
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
601 North Caroline Street
#7143
Baltimore, MD 21287, USA

E-mail address:
Bashar1@jhmi.edu