
CAROL POOLE

Alzheimer's Association National Early-Stage Alumni Advisor

Carol Poole was diagnosed with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) in 2013 and probable Alzheimer's disease in 2014 at age 65.

Carol studied business management at the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York. Her professional career included managing director for an offshore prepress corporation in Barbados and vice president of sales for a national printing firm in New York City, until her retirement in 1997.

Prior to her diagnosis, Carol recognized that she was becoming more forgetful with routine tasks like returning library books and maintaining appointments. She was retired at the time, but active in several volunteer organizations, including serving as president of the county historical preservation council and as a victim advocate for domestic violence. Carol tried to cope with these changes by making lists or covering her mistakes, but when she forgot her husband Ken's birthdate Carol knew it was time to see a doctor.

Carol was diagnosed with polio as a child and was concerned that the changes in her cognition were related to post-polio syndrome. She made an appointment to see a neurologist specializing in this disease and was quickly assured that her symptoms were unrelated and was instructed to focus on reducing stress. Six months later Carol was still experiencing symptoms and during follow-up visits with the neurologist she completed a cognitive evaluation, MRI and spinal tap. She did not have any family or friends with her when the neurologist delivered the diagnosis of MCI and was overcome by fear and sadness.

Carol waited a few days to tell Ken about the diagnosis. During that time she did research online for information about her diagnosis and found the Alzheimer's Association's website, alz.org. After learning more about MCI and Alzheimer's disease, she asked her neurologist, "is this Alzheimer's?" to which he responded, "I think we can assume you have Alzheimer's."

Three months after the diagnosis, Carol began to share the news with family and friends. She was particular about where and when she initiated these conversations and invited friends and colleagues to her home or a private location to discuss it. Reactions have been supportive, with many showing concern and asking questions.

Carol and Ken are in the process of making legal and financial plans and have had conversations about when to move Carol to a supportive living environment as her needs change. The couple is currently working on a list of activities and trips to complete while she is still in the early stage of the disease.

Since her diagnosis, Carol has connected with the Central and North Florida Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association and recently participated in The Longest Day, an annual fundraising event for the Alzheimer's Association that symbolizes the challenging journey of individuals living with Alzheimer's and their caregivers.

As a member of the Alzheimer's Association 2015 National Early-Stage Advisory Group, Carol would like to educate physicians about the value of an early diagnosis and the importance of sharing resources. Carol states, "If I could change anything it would be for physicians to say, 'you are not in this alone, here are resources.'"

Carol and Ken live in Rockledge, FL. Together they have a blended family of three daughters and three sons.

