

Dementia

Improving diagnosis, care, and awareness



‘By bringing people with lived experience together with world-class researchers we are working hard to improve the lives of people living with dementia. We are finding medical treatments and working on ways to shift the dial for those with dementia, and to solve the puzzle of how best to care for people within aged care facilities.’

Professor Velandai Srikanth
Director, NCHA

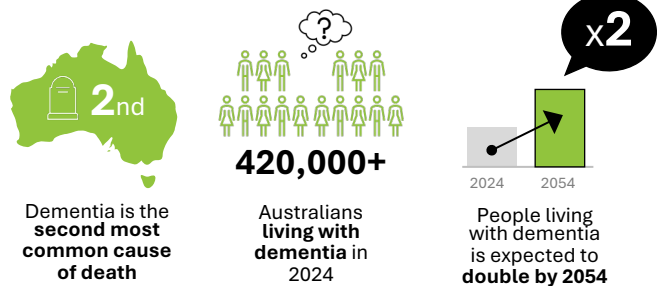


The challenge

With our ageing population and an increasing prevalence of dementia, **there is an urgent need for joint action to address key challenges in dementia.**

Work must be done across the entire patient journey including **increased awareness and prevention, better diagnosis and treatment, and enhanced care models across all key settings in the community, hospital, and aged care.**

Dementia in Australia



Our impact

The NCHA is leading major projects across enhanced diagnosis, better care, and post-diagnostic support to ensure people stay connected during their dementia journey.

Through our Living Labs research program, we are tackling stigma in dementia; improving inpatient care; facilitating community-based physical activity; identifying new methods to screen and confirm dementia in residential aged care; and leading Australia’s update of Clinical Practice Guidelines and Principles of Care for People with Dementia.

Most importantly, our research into new treatments and technologies always values both the person with dementia, as well as their carers and support systems.

References

Dementia Australia, Dementia facts and figures. Available at <https://www.dementia.org.au/about-dementia/dementia-facts-and-figures>

How the NCHA is impacting change

Some of our leading dementia researchers and projects



L-R: Prof Velandai Srikanth, A/Prof Darshini Ayton, Prof Keith Hill, A/Prof Chris Moran, A/Prof Michele Callisaya

Improving access to rehabilitation for people with dementia – removing the stigma

Healthcare professionals and the public often lack knowledge about the benefits of, and ways to access, dementia rehabilitation – preventing people from accessing the care they need. This project tested a toolkit of interventions (including an e-module and a community of practice for GP's) to improve attitudes and knowledge about dementia rehabilitation.

A key impact: Development of a four-week e-course and a community-facing brochure which are being used in the community to reduce stigma associated with dementia.

Improving the hospital experience of people living with dementia – co-designing a digital health passport

People with dementia often receive suboptimal hospital care due to difficulties communicating their needs and preferences. Existing tools to assist communication had limited uptake by health professionals. This study brought together health professionals, people with dementia and their carers to develop a solution to enhance hospital care.

A key impact: Co-designing a Hospital Admission Readiness Toolkit (HART) and model of care embedded into hospital practice to ensure better, person-centred care for patients.

Changing the focus: Facilitating engagement in physical activity for people with dementia in the community

Lower and declining activity levels are common for people with dementia – however they also likely contribute to a decline in physical and cognitive health. This study is developing and evaluating a new model of care to facilitate community-based physical activity engagement for people with mild dementia. Our approach is underpinned by shared decision-making with the person with dementia and their carer to improve and maintain function, independence, safety, and quality of life.

A key impact: Resources developed to support training of health care providers and information for people with dementia and their carers.

Enhanced dementia diagnosis in residential aged care

Accurate diagnosis of dementia is critical to ensure the appropriate care of those in residential aged care – however it is estimated that 1 in 5 residents have undiagnosed dementia. This project is working with patients, carers, and providers to develop and implement improved methods to screen and confirm dementia, while also addressing stigma and ageism.

A key impact: Comprehensive resources with evidence to better support the care of people with dementia and associated neuropsychiatric symptoms in residential aged care.



Looking ahead

Working together through partnerships, collaborations, and investment, we can have a greater impact in transforming health and care for all Australians. Our world-class researchers are creating impactful change by developing innovative solutions to the most pressing issues in healthy ageing.

Connect with us today and help change people's lives!