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Media Statement

LOCAL RESEARCHERS AWARDED KEY FUNDING

A local research team was recently awarded key funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council for their efforts towards stemming dementia for the ageing population.

Two team members, Fremantle's Clinical Neuropsychologist Mandy Vidovich and Wembley's Professor Osvaldo Almeida, were awarded one of the two grants handed to Western Australia as part of a Federal Government response to the growing challenge of dementia in Australia.

Today, there are now at least 227,300 people with dementia in Australia, and this number is expected to rise considerably, to 731,000 by 2050, unless there is a medical breakthrough.*

The pair from the WA Centre for Health and Ageing based at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) will embark on a project to pinpoint the benefits of mental activity to prevent memory decline.

Ms Vidovich said they would divide 160 volunteers in two groups and take them through either educational intervention or rehabilitation techniques over five weeks and monitor progress.

"Past research has shown that mentally stimulating, leisure activities can boost cognition and memory as well as reduce the risk of dementia, so we now want to identify the best types of activities and times to introduce these to prevent or delay memory decline," she said.

"We will monitor volunteers' performance as well as quality of life, over 12 months, to find out which activities are most beneficial."

The results of this study may also produce useful information on how best to delay the onset of dementia, such as Alzheimer's disease.

The Centre's Director of Research Professor Almeida said the number of people with dementia has been increasing dramatically over the past few years and a concerted effort is needed to help our ageing population avoid this burden.

"As the population ages, the risk of dementia increases and there are still no clues for a cure, so this grant will be put to good use in helping us develop effective strategies to prevent or delay its onset," he said.

The Centre is calling for volunteers experiencing memory problems to join the program. People interested in taking part can contact the Centre on (08) 9224 2855.

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*Source: Alzheimer's Australia, www.alzheimers.org.au

Media Contact: Sarah Hayward, WAIMR Media Consultant, m 0411 404 415, o 9388 9280