



Australian Government

NHMRC National Institute for Dementia Research

Wednesday 26 September 2018

MEDIA RELEASE

Dementia leading cause of death for women, second leading cause for all Australians

Dementia remains Australia's second leading cause of death overall, and the leading cause of death for women, according to the [Causes of Death 2017 Report](#) released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Alzheimer's disease and other dementias accounted for 13,729 deaths, including 8,859 deaths of women, in Australia in 2017. The number of deaths from dementia has increased by 68% over the past decade, with the death rate increasing from 33.1 deaths per 100,000 people in 2008, to 41.6 in 2017.

Janice Besch, Director of the NHMRC National Institute for Dementia Research (NNIDR) says that while dementia has been the second leading cause of death since 2015, the increase seen in the death rate is cause for concern.

'As a nation, we are living longer and more of our oldest Australians are experiencing dementia than at any other time. We need continued targeted research into preventive measures and treatments that will deliver better brain health throughout our lives.'

Of particular concern was the higher death rate from dementia reported in women.

'Our population data show that women are likely to live longer than men and this may be a contributing factor,' said Ms Besch.

'International studies show that women are also more likely to be providing care for their loved ones with dementia. In a world where women are experiencing unprecedented levels of mid-life economic hardship, this population group will be important and deserving beneficiaries of research that can improve health outcomes by delaying and hopefully preventing dementia.'

NNIDR is part of the Australian Government's \$200 million Boosting Dementia Research Initiative and is targeting, coordinating and translating the Australian research effort in dementia. NHMRC Boosting Dementia Research Grants provide financial support for individual research and research teams to undertake projects in identified priority research areas.

The Boosting Dementia Research Initiative represents over a million hours in new dementia research and has significantly boosted the capacity of the dementia research sector. The Initiative has facilitated the development of new technologies, such as a non-invasive ultrasound therapy method that may improve the efficacy of readily available treatments.

The Initiative has also seen improvements in the treatment and care of those living with dementia, with the flow-on benefits from research undertaken now expected for years to come.

Since the Initiative was announced in 2014, a total of 135 grants have been awarded to 282 leading dementia researchers working across 26 universities and medical research institutes.

NNIDR has been targeting, coordinating and translating the strategic expansion of dementia research in Australia since 2015. By collaborating with researchers, involving those living with dementia in research efforts, and connecting with health professionals and policy makers, NNIDR is committed to achieving the World Dementia Council's international target – a five-year delay in the onset of dementia by 2025.

Further information about the early outcomes of the Boosting Dementia Research Initiative can be found on [the NNIDR website](#).

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