Media Release

Dementia care needs to be redesigned to meet challenges of 21st Century

A new report from Alzheimer’s Disease International reveals that most people with dementia have yet to receive a diagnosis, let alone comprehensive and continuing healthcare, which remains a key barrier to progress.


Alzheimer’s Australia National CEO Maree McCabe said the report’s release highlights the need for a radical change in the way healthcare is delivered to people living with dementia, and reinforces Alzheimer’s Australia’s calls for a fully-funded National Dementia Strategy with measurable outcomes.

“Dementia affects 47 million people worldwide, more than 353,800 people are living with dementia in Australia. Dementia is the second leading cause of death in Australia and what this report highlights again, is the real need for a national, co-ordinated approach to dementia in Australia,” Ms McCabe said.

According to the report, around half of those in high income countries have received a diagnosis, and one in ten or less in low and middle income countries.

The report calls for:

- Greater involvement of non-specialist primary care staff to meet increasing demand for dementia care and reduce the cost of care per person by up to 40 per cent
- Strengthening of primary care services to take on this role with specialists to provide guidance and support
- Greater affordability of new treatments to ensure equity and social justice for the two-thirds of people with dementia living in low-resourced countries
- Clear person-centred ‘care pathways’ with a structured and organised approach

Ms McCabe said care-pathways were now a common component of chronic disease care for other conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and cancer.

“People living with dementia deserve the same focus,” Ms McCabe said.

“Without a medical breakthrough the number of people with dementia in Australia is expected to soar to around 900,000 by 2050. A National Dementia Strategy with measurable outcomes based on the National Framework for Action on Dementia 2015-2019 would deliver a long-term commitment to developing better supports for people with dementia.”

---

1 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2012) Dementia in Australia
3 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2012) Dementia in Australia
Ms McCabe said a National Dementia Strategy for Australia would include increasing awareness, risk reduction strategies, timely diagnosis, coordinating approaches to post-diagnosis care and support, initiatives to improve the quality of care for people with dementia, end-of-life care to support the choices of people with end-stage dementia and investment in dementia research and support for consumer involvement in dementia research.

“Timely diagnosis is something Alzheimer’s Australia has long been advocating for and is so important. On average, symptoms are noticed by family members three years before a diagnosis is made, some Australians never receive a diagnosis,” Ms McCabe said.

“Access to early intervention and treatment, support and services can make the world of difference to a person living with dementia because with the right support and services it is possible to live well with dementia for many years in the community.”

Professor Martin Prince, lead author, from King’s College London, said: “This landmark report highlights the need to redesign and re-purpose dementia care services for the challenges of the 21st Century.”

To mark World Alzheimer’s Day in Australia, Wednesday 21 September, Dr Ronald Petersen Director of the US Mayo Clinic Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center and the Mayo Clinic Study on Aging will give the National Press Club Address as part of a national speaking tour for Alzheimer’s Australia where he will share the US experience and highlight effective action on this very issue.

The World Alzheimer Report 2016 was researched and written by the Global Observatory for Ageing and Dementia Care at King’s College London in collaboration with the Personal Social Services Research Unit at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences (LSE).

Alzheimer’s Australia is the peak body for people with dementia and their families and carers. It provides advocacy, support services, education and information. An estimated 353,800 people have dementia in Australia. This number is projected to reach more than half a million by 2030.

National Dementia Helpline: 1800 100 500
An interpreter service is available
(The National Dementia Helpline is an Australian Government Initiative)
Dementia is a National Health Priority Area

www.fightdementia.org.au

Media enquiries:
Bianca Armytage / 0407 019 430 / Bianca.armytage@alzheimer’s.org.au

-Ends-