Towards a National Dementia Preventative Health Strategy

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The Dementia Epidemic

• 260,000 Australians with dementia
  – In 20 years > 560,000
  – By 2050 ~1 million

• Unlike epidemics caused by treatable infectious diseases, the dementia epidemic can only be lessened by prevention.
Dementia and Prevention

• Dementia often perceived as inevitable, untreatable and unpreventable symptom of ageing.
• Incurable? Yes at the moment.
• Growing body of evidence suggests a number of lifestyle and health factors may reduce the risk of developing dementia.
Dementia and Prevention

• 3 tiers of prevention:
  – 1°: Reduce dementia incidence through elimination or treatment of specific risk factors.
  – 2°: Reduce prevalence by shortening its duration.
  – 3°: Reduce the impact of complications and disability of dementia - measures aimed at care strategies, minimising suffering.
Is Dementia A Health Issue?

• Greatest contributor to burden of disability at older ages\(^1\).
• Accounts for more than half the burden of disease among older people\(^1\).
• 3\(^{rd}\) leading cause of death for all ages\(^2\).
• 4\(^{th}\) leading specific cause of burden of disease/injury 2010\(^2\).

What are the costs?

• Costs of dementia care (2008)\(^1\):
  – Direct costs $5.4 billion
  – Indirect costs $5.5 billion

• By 2060, spending set to outstrip any other health condition\(^2\).

1. Access Economics (2009), Making Choices
2. Access Economics (2009), Front of Mind
Challenges of an Ageing Population

• 2007:
  – 13% of Australians were over 65
• 2056
  – 25% (11 million) will be over 65
• Burden of disease tends to increase with age.
• In 2003, those aged 65-74 accounted for 7% of population, but experienced 16% of the total burden of disease.
• With ageing population, higher prevalence of non-communicable chronic conditions.
RISK FACTORS

- Non-Modifiable:
  - Age
  - Genetics
  - Family History
  - Gender
RISK FACTORS

- Hypertension
- Type 2 diabetes
- Stroke
- High cholesterol
- Poor diet
- Depression
- Obesity
- Physical inactivity
- Smoking
- Excessive alcohol
- Social inactivity
- Head trauma

* Alzheimer’s disease and Vascular dementia
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHRONIC DISEASE</th>
<th>MODIFIABLE RISK FACTORS</th>
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<td>Diet</td>
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<td>Dementia</td>
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<td>Heart disease</td>
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<td>Type 2 diabetes</td>
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<td>Chronic kidney disease</td>
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Hypertension

- Midlife hypertension – increased risk of cognitive decline 15-20yrs later.
- Relative risk of dementia > 4 times higher in untreated patients with hypertension (Honolulu).
- Hypertension treatment = reduced dementia risk: Syst-Eur, HOPE, Honolulu
Diabetes

- Diabetes associated with:
  - 39% increased risk of AD
  - 138% increased risk VaD

High Cholesterol

- Midlife high cholesterol = likely dementia risk factor
- Statins: possible reduced dementia risk
Smoking

• Increased risk of dementia for smokers.
• Risk increases with pack years of smoking (Honolulu).
Diet

- Healthy diet important for brain health/reduced dementia risk.
- Association between dietary fats & dementia.
  - Avoid saturated & transunsaturated fats
  - Include unsaturated fats
- Antioxidants, Mediterranean diet
Obesity

• Midlife obesity = ↑ risk of AD
• 36 year study¹ (obese @ midlife):
  – >3 x AD risk
  – 5x VaD risk
  – (overweight at midlife) 2x AD & VaD risk
• Meta-analysis of prospective studies:
  Compared with normal BMI, overweight 35% ↑ risk AD, 33% ↑ VaD in late life and 26% ↑ risk of any dementia².

2. Anstey, K et al (2011)
Mental Activity

- Brain plasticity and reserve
- Mentally stimulating activities, reduced dementia risk.
- Higher education, occupation, leisure activities.
- Also in late life.
Social Activity

- Social activity & engagement protective against cognitive impairment and dementia.
- Social activity and brain reserve.
Physical Activity

- Sedentary behaviour: increased dementia risk.
- Regular physical activity in midlife and late life lowers dementia risk.

**MOST BENEFIT:**
MENTAL+SOCIAL+PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES
Depression

- Commonly co-occurs in dementia patients.
- History of depression a risk factor.
The Message:
What do Australians know?

- ~1 in 5: dementia risk is not possible
- ~1 in 3: don’t know
- ~1 in 6: possible, don’t know what can be done
- ~1 in 2: mental activity
- Majority of Australians are not aware of links between vascular risk factors and dementia.

Taken from Farrow (2008)
A Population Health Perspective

- Around 97% of Australian adults have at least one modifiable risk factor.
- Around 50% have 2\(^1\).

A Population Health Perspective

• Prevent or delay the onset of dementia AND other chronic diseases such as CVD, stroke and diabetes.
  – EG: Physical Activity:
    • Inactivity 70% to 50% = 5.7% less dementia¹
    • Moderate activity = 17% less stroke risk, high = 25%²

The Message:
What do we currently have?

• Mind your Mind – Alzheimer’s Australia’s national dementia risk reduction program, promoting a ‘brain healthy’ lifestyle.
• 7 signposts to ‘Mind your Mind’.
• Soon to be released, Brain Health and Heart Health resources, endorsed by Heart Foundation.
What is needed?

• Recognition of dementia as a chronic disease.
• Adopt a population health approach to dementia.
• Incorporating dementia into national preventative health programs and planning.
  – Add dementia to existing and planned programs that address heart disease, diabetes and stroke
• Invest in research to investigate prevention, early intervention & treatment of dementia.
• Raise community awareness & health professional awareness
• Facilitate integrated multi-disciplinary care across services, settings and sectors.
• Sharing of resources = cost effective national preventative health strategy.
• Increased incentive: look after physical health as well as brain health.
• Hon. Mark Butler, 18th May 2011:
  – “It’s not just puzzles…A healthy body and healthy mind approach” is needed for Alzheimer’s disease.
  – Need to “link” dementia agenda on the preventative health agenda.
• The time is right to take action now.
• Newly formed Australian National Preventive Health Agency.
  – Recognition of the role of prevention and potential health, social and economic outcomes.
  – Potential for holistic approach to health with cognitive health being equally as important as physical health.
For more information and resources, visit the Mind your Mind website at mindyourmind.org.au

THANK YOU