

MEDIA RELEASE



Five World Class Research Grants to support people living with dementia and their caregivers

The Dementia Centre for Research Collaboration (DCRC) is pleased to announce the five successful applicants in the latest round of World Class Research Projects.

The grants have been awarded to Professor Lynn Chenoweth, Dr Karen Charlton, Associate Professor Kate Laver, Dr Joan Ostaszkiwicz and Dr Lily Xiao.

From a total funding pool of \$1.8 million, each of the selected projects will undertake trials and studies to produce evidence interventions, promote practice change and inform policy.

These grants are highly competitive and sought after in the research sector, and provide vital insights into reducing dementia risk, improving accurate and timely diagnoses and establishing treatment and care options for people who live with dementia.

In making this announcement, DCRC Directors, Professors Kaarin Anstey, Elizabeth Beattie and Henry Brodaty congratulate the recipients on their outstanding proposals and thank all applicants.



Dr Karen Charlton's world-first, placebo controlled, randomised clinical trial will assess whether practical dietary recommendations can prevent dementia in high-risk individuals.

“There is growing evidence that some plant foods are beneficial for brain health, particularly those that are deep-red and purple-blue in colour due to the presence of anthocyanins (a type of flavonoid), said Dr Charlton.

“We want to research whether dietary anthocyanins, provided either by a commercially available Australian fruit, the Queen Garnet Plum, or through commonly available foods (“the purple diet”) for 6 months can delay cognitive decline in persons diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment (MCI). The ‘purple diet’ includes anthocyanin-rich foods that are convenient, tasty and affordable (eg. berries, cherries, plums, red cabbage, red onions, eggplant, etc.).”

“Interventions to prevent further decline in people diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) are essential as approximately 50% of this group will progress to Alzheimer’s Disease within 4 years from diagnosis.”

“This research study will enable us to better understand the role of diet in preventing further cognitive decline in people at high risk of dementia using foods that have anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and neuroprotective properties in order to develop practical and achievable dietary advice for better brain health.”

Professor Karen Charlton is a leading research dietitian and registered public health nutritionist based in the School of Medicine at the University of Wollongong (UOW) and an affiliated research fellow at the Illawarra Health and Medical Research She will lead a multidisciplinary team of researchers from UOW, NeuRA and UNSW that bring skills in nutrition and dietetics, neuropsychology, geriatrics, neuroscience, biostatistics and social marketing.



Up to 38% of people with a diagnosis of dementia are incontinent of urine and up to 27% have faecal incontinence. These rates increase significantly for people with dementia residing in aged care homes, where up to 90% need help to maintain continence or to manage incontinence.

“Our research will help carers of people living with dementia and incontinence to cope with the physical, psychological and psychosocial aspects of incontinence, to optimise safety, respect and dignity for both carers and people living with dementia,” said **Dr Joan Ostaszewicz**.

“Incontinence is a sensitive and often taboo topic. People living with dementia are at risk of violations to their personal dignity during continence care interactions, especially if they require care in a hospital or aged care home.”

“Incontinence and dementia are the top two contributing factors to the decision to seek formal care in an aged care home but incontinence is no less challenging to manage in this setting.”

“The highly personal and sensitive nature of incontinence makes the task of caring for anyone with incontinence challenging, particularly if the person does not understand or appreciate the nature of the care.”

Dr Joan Ostaszewicz is a Registered Nurse with clinical and academic expertise in gerontological nursing education and research. She specialises in the management of incontinence in frail older adults. She is the Director of Aged Care Research at the National Ageing Research Institute.



Professor Lily Xiao's research project aims to strengthen partnerships with carers through innovative delivery of an Australian iSupport for Dementia program.

“Informal carers are the cornerstone of helping people with dementia remain at home for as long as possible. However, most are less prepared for their role than professional carers,” said Professor Xiao.

“The World Health Organization has developed iSupport for Dementia, a comprehensive online dementia education and skill training program for informal carers and we will work with carers, hospital memory clinics and community aged care providers to implement the Australian iSupport program.”

“We want to determine the impact of the program on the quality of life of those living with dementia and their carers and the cost-effectiveness of the program. We expect that the program will strengthen partnerships between informal carers and dementia care service providers. We also expect that the program will improve reach to carers in rural and remote areas and to carers of working age.”

“The ultimate goal of this research is to provide multilingual iSupport programs for carers from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and therefore improve quality of life for people living with dementia and their carers in the community.”

Dr Lily Xiao is a Professor of Nursing in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences at Flinders University, South Australia. She is a key contributor to the World Health Organization iSupport for Dementia and has led a team to adapt the iSupport content to the Australian socio-cultural context in a small pilot study.

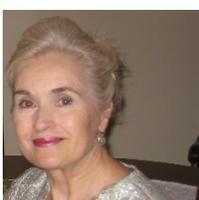


“Receiving a diagnosis of dementia is a life changing event which can trigger a variety of reactions,” said **Associate Professor Kate Laver**, research fellow at the Flinders Health & Medical Research Institute.

“For some, it is relief as the diagnosis helps make sense of symptoms. For many it will be a sense of loss and grief. Regardless, it is a time when people re-appraise their lifestyle and plan for the years ahead.”

“Current practice does not support people after receiving a diagnosis of dementia. People with dementia have reported that post diagnostic supports which establish hope and promote how to live well with a diagnosis of dementia are critical.”

We want to test a ‘Take Charge’ intervention in which we intervene shortly after a diagnosis of dementia and promote hope, independence, and quality of life with the ultimate goal of keeping the person at home and engaged in the community for longer. This approach is innovative and could change the current usual trajectory of decline after diagnosis.”



“People living with dementia can have particularly difficult experiences, including agitation, delirium and falls, in busy and unfamiliar hospital environments. These experiences are often worsened by care staff to engage therapeutically during care,” said **Professor Lynn Chenoweth**.

“Our project will address these issues by building capacity among healthcare staff to implement person-centred care, therapy and treatment in sub-acute care.”

“By adjusting policy and practice environments, through staff education and support, stakeholder ownership of change, ongoing consultation with stakeholders and responsive adaptation of project plans/procedures we can institute essential change.”

Lynn Chenoweth is the Professor of Nursing, Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing (CHeBA), Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales, Sydney. She is Adjunct Professor, School of Nursing, the University of Notre Dame Australia and School of Nursing, Macau, China.

Funded by the Australian government, the DCRC’s primary research foci within the broader topic of dementia research are prevention, assessment and diagnosis, intervention and treatment, living with dementia and care, with a particular investment in translation of knowledge into care and practice.

To get in touch with any of the grant recipients, please contact Alex McTavish, Media Communications Coordinator at DCRC: alex.mctavish@qut.edu.au or 0406 858 882.