# Research in the News

alzheimer's wa
the dementia experts

## March 2020

1. A $1 million, five year research project is being funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council to explore how integration between schools and aged care / retirement living environments can improve health and social outcomes. The project, undertaken by several Australian Universities and an architectural firm, hopes to develop a new model of shared living which will break down the silos that exist in aged care and improve learning outcomes in school-aged children, as well as maximise the use of buildings, technology and equipment, and promote career opportunities for young people.
   Read more >>

2. An independent review of the NDIS Act by David Tune AO PSM has found extensive waiting times, complex processes and a failure to understand the needs of people with disability, according to NDIS minister Stuart Robert. The report recommends giving people more time when seeking NDIS approval, the provision of additional commonwealth funding to help people navigate the system, and "ambitious but achievable" timeframes for plan approvals and review. The government will give a detailed response to the report in the coming weeks.
   Read more >>

   Read the discussion paper >>

3. A new study by researchers at the University of Surrey has found that special eye tests could help identify which people living with dementia struggle most with depth perception, a common factor in falls risk. As part of the study, twenty-four volunteers living with dementia had their eyesight closely monitored over a twelve month period - the depth perception tests were carefully chosen to be suitable for people with dementia, so that even those with poor memory scores could participate. The researchers also wanted to ascertain if dementia affected depth perception to a greater degree as the condition progresses. Over the study's observation period, the participants showed no significant deteriorations in their eyesight or ability to judge distances, despite a reduction in their memory test scores. The findings of this research suggest that changes in eyesight should not be dismissed as a simple result of dementia and should be appropriately investigated as part of a routine, dementia-friendly eye examination.
   Read now >>

55 Walters Drive, Osborne Park WA 6017 | PO Box 1509, Subiaco WA 6904
1300 66 77 88 | support@alzheimerswa.org.au | alzheimerswa.org.au
ABN: 82 102 951 986

4. According to a new study from researchers in Michigan, optimism, patience and the ability to embrace change in both people living with dementia and their partners is linked to improved health, well-being and cognitive functioning over their lifespan. Researchers say a positive and optimistic partner can encourage healthier habits like sensible diet, social interaction and regular exercise, as well as help to maintain memory and general cognition.
   Read now >>

5. Researchers from Switzerland, Singapore and Australia have identified a unique property of a neurotoxin found in the venom of coral snakes that could lead to the treatment of neurological disorders. The neurotoxin, which is believed to be the most complex of all snake venoms, targets protein receptors that regulate communication between nerve cells and scientists hope that studying it may lead to breakthroughs in treatments for conditions such as Alzheimer's.
   Read now >>

6. Alzheimer's Research UK, with backing from philanthropist Bill Gates, has launched a project to develop a wearable device that can detect early signs of Alzheimer's disease. The EDON (Early Detection of Neurodegenerative diseases) device will collect a variety of data including gait, heart rate and sleep patterns and researchers hope to analyse this information to map signs of the disease years before any symptoms appear. Volunteers through the Accelerating Detection of Disease Programme will wear the device and share their data, which will also contribute to studies on cancer and heart disease.
   Read now >>

7. By measuring iron deposits in the brains of people with Parkinson's disease, researchers say they can detect the progression of dementia. Previously, testing was focused on the loss of brain mass, which would generally only be visible in the later stages of the disease. Iron in the brain is a natural part of the ageing process, but an increased level has been linked with protein accumulation, a key factor in Alzheimer's disease. The researchers used a new technique called quantitative susceptibility mapping, which uses magnetic resonance imaging, to measure the presence of iron in each participant's brain. They found that people with more iron in the hippocampus and thalamus regions of the brain performed worse in their motor functioning and cognitive testing.
   Read more >>