

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



New Tasmanian study to identify early predictors of Alzheimer's dementia

The University of Tasmania is on the hunt for volunteers over the age of 60 to take part in a new study on Alzheimer's dementia.

The School of Psychology's Dr Matthew Summers said previous studies had shown that 10 to 15 per cent of people with mild cognitive impairments would develop Alzheimer's each year.

"As only 1 to 2 per cent of adults over 55 years of age develop Alzheimer's dementia each year, having mild cognitive impairment appears to significantly increase the risk for developing dementia," Dr Summers said.

"However, it is currently impossible to predict which individuals with mild memory problems will: develop Alzheimer's dementia; develop another type of dementia; remain stable; or recover."

Dr Summers said researchers from the School of Psychology at the Launceston campus were continuing their efforts to identify early cognitive markers which could predict a person's risk for developing Alzheimer's dementia.

"Recently published results from the mild cognitive impairment study have isolated a cluster of subclinical cognitive impairments that are associated with increased risk of developing Alzheimer's dementia within three years," he said.

"To confirm these findings volunteers are sought to join the mild cognitive impairment study. Participants need to be over 60 years of age and have experienced problems with one or more of the following -- memory, attention, concentration, word finding, or speed of thinking."

Dr Summers said the two-year longitudinal study would involve volunteers undertaking cognitive testing every 12 months to assess any changes in memory, attention, concentration, and language functions over time.

"It is hoped that the results of this study will enable early prediction of risk for developing Alzheimer's dementia," Dr Summers said.

“Accurate early detection would enable intervention to be initiated prior to the onset of dementia, which may delay or prevent the development of dementia”

For more information please contact Dr Mathew Summers on (03) 6324 3266.

To volunteer to participate in the mild cognitive impairment study, please contact Ms Shannon Klekociuk on (03) 6324 3120.

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