

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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New research measures success of world's first dementia MOOC

New research into the scope and success of the world's first Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in Dementia has been released.

Researchers from the University of Tasmania's Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre, based in the Faculty of Health, measured the participation and completion rates for the first cohort of people registered for the MOOC in late 2013.

The study found almost 10,000 people registered for the first iteration of the MOOC with 38% of registrants completing the online program.

"This completion rate is substantially higher than the 5-10% completion rates most commonly achieved for MOOCs worldwide," Wicking Dementia Centre senior lecturer Dr Lyn Goldberg said.

The Understanding Dementia MOOC is a free, nine-week online course which builds on the latest international research on dementia. It was developed by the Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre and launched in 2013.

The study showed that people with lower levels of education were as likely as those with university experience to actively participate in and complete the MOOC.

"While MOOCs in general overwhelmingly attract younger people who have completed some university-level studies, the Understanding Dementia MOOC participants came from diverse educational backgrounds; from post-graduate degree holders through to primary school leavers," Dr Goldberg said.

"In addition, more than 50% of those who completed the MOOC were more than 50 years of age.

"These results were surprising. We had thought, based on other published findings, that those with higher levels of education would be more likely to complete the Understanding Dementia MOOC than those without such educational exposure or preparation.

"It was gratifying to know that the design of the Understanding Dementia MOOC enabled participants from diverse backgrounds to succeed in the course."

Professor of Dementia Studies and Education Fran McInerney said dementia is an emerging global public health issue.

Professor McInerney said there was a vital need to understand its impact and how best to provide health-care solutions.

“The Understanding Dementia MOOC is making a valuable contribution to this knowledge on a world-wide basis,” she said.

“Evaluating how people access and progress through the MOOC helps us identify what we can add to strengthen the course into the future.”

Since launching in 2013, the Understanding MOOC course has been held three times. It has attracted around 50,000 students from across Australia and internationally with a world-leading completion rate overall of 36%.

Registrations are now open for the next Understanding Dementia MOOC course offering, starting on August 17. For details visit www.utas.edu.au/wicking/wca/mooc

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