



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

Issued: 5 February 2015

Next generation of dementia scientists to focus on lifestyle factors

Scientists investigating the causes of dementia will study how lifestyle factors impact blood flow in the brain.

Led by the University of Edinburgh, four Scottish universities are to join forces to study how diet, exercise and other factors affect the amount of blood that reaches brain tissue and how that may affect memory.

Researchers say that a reduction in blood flow can impair memory and is one of the known early changes in Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

The project – which has been funded by the Alzheimer's Society – will establish a new doctoral training centre for PhD students across the partner universities in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, St Andrews and Dundee.

The centre is one of eight newly funded by Alzheimer's Society around the UK that will support 55 PhDs and Clinical Fellows to conduct cutting edge research into all types of dementia.

This is the single biggest funding commitment that has been made to support dementia early-career dementia researchers in the UK.

The new research programme will investigate various aspects of the relationship between blood flow and the changes within the brain that cause dementia.

Some PhD students will investigate the role of diet and other lifestyle factors in regulating blood flow, and the way this alters brain function.

Others will look at dementia in mice and whether drugs aimed at combatting reduced blood flow can impact the course of the disease.

The team hopes that by better understanding the interaction between lifestyle choices and blood circulation, they can uncover new targets for drug therapies.

Prof Karen Horsburgh, of the Centre for Neuroregeneration at the University of Edinburgh, who is leading the centre, said: "Understanding more about the causes of Alzheimer's disease

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and ways to prevent it from developing, either through lifestyle changes or drug treatments, is incredibly important in order to reduce the number of people living with the condition.”

Dr Doug Brown, Director of Research and Development at the Alzheimer’s Society said:

“There’s a huge amount of progress being made by the dementia research community but unless we attract and train the best young talent we will limit how quickly we can make ground breaking discoveries. For too long dementia research has been underfunded and as a result we have significantly fewer scientists than other conditions, with six times more people working in cancer than dementia.

“If we’re going to defeat dementia we need to give the best brains the right opportunities and build a research workforce that is fit for the future. That’s why we’re proud to be announcing the largest investment of its kind, which will see £5 million committed to create the next generation of dementia researchers. People with dementia deserve nothing less than an all-out fightback against the condition and our Doctoral Training Centres will help us enlist the right people to lead it.”

For further information, please contact:

Anna Borthwick, Press and PR Office, tel +44 131 650 2246, mobile +44 7825 523 144;
email anna.borthwick@ed.ac.uk