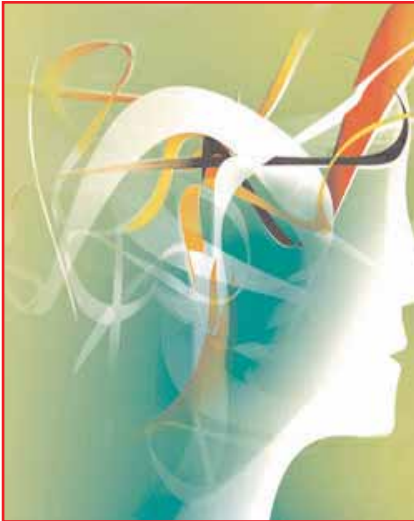


THE DEMENTIA/ALZHEIMERS REPORT

TRENDS IN MANAGEMENT • MEDICINE • BUILDINGS • OPERATIONAL MATTERS

APRIL 2011

VOLUME 10



'New brain scan could detect Alzheimer's'

MELBOURNE: A brain scan to detect Alzheimer's disease could be available in hospitals worldwide within the next year and could boost efforts to detect the degenerative and fatal condition, Melbourne experts say.

The technique, known as a positron emission tomography (PET) scan, can find and analyse a protein known as beta-amyloid, which is linked to Alzheimer's.

"Amyloid imaging with PET scans is expected to be widely available soon for clinical practice," said Christopher Rowe, a professor of nuclear medicine at the Austin Hospital. "It will be an important new tool in the assessment of cognitive decline."

The results from three studies on advances in PET scans for Alzheimer's were presented at a meeting of the Society for Nuclear Medicine's annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas. Researchers said that the new methods will be of growing importance as the world population ages, and could provide clues toward treating Alzheimer's. There is no known cure.

"From a macro perspective, amyloid imaging with PET scans can help to ascertain the likelihood that individuals will deteriorate cognitively within a few years," said Kevin Ong, a research scientist at the Austin Hospital.

Eye test may provide clues to Alzheimer's disease

BOSTON, MA: Australian scientists are reporting encouraging early results from an eye test they hope will create a simple way to detect signs of Alzheimer's disease. The test is experimental, but doctors know that Alzheimer's causes changes in the eyes, not just the brain.

The eye test involves photographing blood vessels in the retina, the nerve layer lining the back of the eyes. Drops are used to dilate a patient's eyes, just as they are in a routine exam. Researchers compared retinal photos of 110 healthy people, with 13 Alzheimer's and 13 with mild cognitive impairment or "pre-Alzheimer's." The widths of certain blood vessels were different in those with Alzheimer's than in the others, and the amount of difference matched the amount of plaque seen on brain scans. Earlier work by American researcher Lee Goldstein of Boston University, showed that amyloid, the protein that makes up Alzheimer's brain plaque, can be measured in the lens of the eyes of some people with the disease.

Study helps to explain 'sundowning' with dementia

COLUMBUS, OH: New research provides the best evidence to date that the late-day anxiety and agitation sometimes seen in older institutionalized adults, especially those with dementia, has a biological basis in the brain.

The findings could help explain "sundowning," a syndrome in which older adults show high levels of anxiety, agitation, general activity and delirium in late afternoon and evening, before they would normally go to bed. "It's a big problem for caregivers. Patients can get aggressive and very disruptive," said Tracy Bedrosian, lead author of the study and a doctoral student in neuroscience at Ohio State University.

The new study found that aged mice showed significantly more activity and more anxiety-like behaviours in the hours before they would normally sleep when compared to middle-aged mice – just like sundowning in humans. In these mice, the researchers found changes in parts of their brain associated with attention, emotions and arousal, all of which could be associated with the behaviour seen in sundowning.

Program to fight dementia in indigenous people

ADELAIDE: A program has been launched to help tackle alcohol-related dementia in Aboriginal people. A Federal Government study showed Aboriginal people were up to five times more likely than others to develop dementia.

The program launched in Adelaide hopes to teach teenagers about the dangers of undiagnosed dementia. Scott Wilson from the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council thinks it is the first time the mental health issue has been highlighted in such a way.

Planners nix idea for Alzheimer's facility in Mentor

MENTOR, OH: A 66-bed Alzheimer's/memory care facility will not go up at a busy corner of Mentor's Newell Creek development, as had been proposed. Mentor Planning Commission members voted unanimously against issuing a land-use amendment and allowing Vancouver, Wash.-based JEA Senior Living to build what would have been a 31,992 square foot building on a 4.85-acre lot at the southwest corner of the Route 615/Route 84 intersection.

Commission members found the facility represented a substantial departure from the intent of the previous plan, which initially called for a school on the site and was later revised for development of 28 townhouses.

Plan for new centre for research into Alzheimer's

SAN FRANCISCO, CA: The Gladstone Institutes has announced plans to create a Center for Comprehensive Alzheimer's Disease Research. A \$6 million lead gift from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation will help launch the center of excellence that will let Gladstone scientists more quickly develop therapies for those who suffer or are at risk of getting Alzheimer's disease.

Gladstone, a leading non-profit biomedical-research organisation, is trying to raise \$40 million in philanthropic support for Alzheimer's research by 2020.

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• A half day seminar in London, UK www.seniorshousing.co.uk/core/seminars/UK-HD-Dementia.pdf

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NEWS BRIEFS

★ ComfortCare Homes, the newest Baldwin City business, will open in June and will be the only facility in Baldwin that handles the later stages of Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Doug Stark created ComfortCare Homes in Victoria 18 years ago. Scott Schultz, President of the ComfortCare Homes in Baldwin City, licenses the ComfortCare Homes' name, logo, forms and training, but the Baldwin City house is locally owned and operated

Daffodils project to offer relief for Alzheimer's sufferers?

CHRISTCHURCH, NZ: Daffodils may provide a valuable source of income for South Island farmers, if a joint project between a Welsh drug manufacturer and the Canterbury Development Corporation comes off.

Alzeim Ltd, based in southern Wales, extracts a substance from daffodil bulbs used to treat Alzheimer's sufferers. The company has spent seven years identifying the ideal growing conditions to increase levels of the compound galantamine in the flowers.

The corporation has large-scale crops in Wales ready for commercialisation but needs a second growing season to ensure supply. Alzeim believes New Zealand is the perfect Southern Hemisphere location and approached the Can-

terbury Development Corporation (CDC) for help.

Jim Grennell, sector leader for agribusiness, said CDC was helping the UK company evaluate the opportunity. Alzeim was also looking at setting up a processing plant.

Kevin Stephens, CEO of Alzeim, said he was confident the New Zealand crop would work. The first results would be known this spring.

Until now there had been problems with supply of galantamine, previously available only from wildflowers or by making it artificially.

Galantamine is effectively a toxin that the daffodil uses to protect itself. In Alzheimer's patients it slows the breakdown of a neurotransmitter that carries messages between brain cells. Galantamine stops or slows down the process.

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NEWS BRIEFS

★ Alzheimer's Australia says it's disappointed that dementia has not featured as a priority for funding in the Federal Budget. The body points to an Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report that shows that 53 per cent of the 221,500 people living in Government subsidised residential care in 2008-09 had a medical diagnosis of dementia and that they require a higher level of care.

Perth researcher claims Alzheimer's breakthrough

PERTH: A Western Australian researcher claims to have made a breakthrough in his bid to give Alzheimer's sufferers a better quality of life.

A Perth Alzheimer's sufferer has shown a reduction in symptoms after being implanted with the hormone testosterone in a new Western Australian medical trial.

Professor Ralph Martins from Edith Cowan University says the 33-year-old woman's standard of memory stabilised and in some instances improved since the trial began 12 months ago.

Professor Martins says testosterone could be faster and more effective than other treatments being looked at for the disease. He says test-

osterone reduces the production of amyloids, a small toxic protein which is a key feature of Alzheimer's.

"This is outstanding in terms of a response to treatment, we've never been able to basically stop the disease," he said.

"All other features are consistent with the notion her disease has basically been slowed down."

Professor Martins says the next step is to test the treatment on more patients to confirm its legitimacy.

He now plans to extend patient trials with sufferers from across the country.

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NEWS BRIEFS

★ A former UK Government nursing advisor has been appointed to a new post at the care home provider Southern Cross. Deborah Sturdy will be its head of dementia care at Southern Cross Healthcare. Ms Sturdy was made redundant from a Department of Health post as nurse advisor for older people. Her role at Southern Cross will focus on the delivery of the firm's dementia strategy.

Smart shoes to track wandering dementia patients

WELLINGTON, NZ: Reminiscent of the shoe phone technology used in the sixties tv comedy *Get Smart* (pictured), footwear fitted with a GPS is designed to track in real time people with dementia who go wandering.

Brisbane-based Tracking Central has just signed for exclusive rights to the Smart Shoe in Australia and New Zealand. The shoes are likely to cost around US\$200-\$300 and are due to be released later this year.

They could find support in New Zealand given 43,000 people suffer from dementia there. Alzheimers, the most common form of dementia, accounts for 50-70 per cent of those numbers,

Alzheimers New Zealand's Kimberley Ebbett said. A World Alzheimer global study recently said nearly 10 million caregivers spend \$148 billion a year on the care of Alzheimer patients.

While the New Zealand organisation has just learned of the Smart Shoe, it does not endorse any products.

Existing technology used to keep track of those with dementia include a pendant or a watch which contain a radio transmitter. The person with dementia is found by using a receiver tuned to that frequency. They have been successfully used in eight of the Alzheimer NZ's local organisations.

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