

New research highlights dramatically reduced risk of developing dementia

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People with memory problems are less at risk of developing dementia than previously thought, a new study led by the University of Leicester and Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust reveals.

The five year research published in *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* analysed data from 41 studies and dovetails with a Government focus to establish memory clinics in every town in the UK.

The research led by Dr Alex Mitchell from the University of Leicester Department of Cancer Studies and Molecular Medicine was carried out with Dr. Shiri-Feshki of Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust.

Dr Mitchell said: "This new research suggests that people with [mild cognitive impairment](#) (MCI) appear to have a lower risk of progressing to [dementia](#) than previously believed.

"Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) is an important disorder of memory and related areas found in about 1 in 6 people seen in general practice. The condition can occur in mid or late life and until recently most doctors told people with MCI that their risk of developing dementia was up to 15% per year making deterioration almost inevitable within 5 to 10 years.

"Our research found that the proportion of people who progressed was 10% per year in high risk groups and in fact only 5% per year in low risk groups. Moreover only a minority (20-40%) of people developed

dementia even after extended follow-up and the risk appeared to reduce slightly with time.

"These results should be seen as positive for those with [memory problems](#) even for those that struggle with the kind of memory tests given by the GP or in a memory clinic. There is a large effort to find out who is most at risk of further decline as well to find strategies that might slow down such progress."

GPs have often been reluctant to give a diagnosis of MCI because of its consequences but this current finding should encourage clinicians to identify people with memory problems. Many such individuals stay stable for a long period and a substantial number also improve.

There are at least 1 million people in the UK with MCI without dementia. In February the government announced funding for a specialised memory clinic in every town giving important focus on this often overlooked condition.

Source: University of Leicester

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