

# Detecting early dementia in Parkinson's disease

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PD affects one in 100 Australians over the age of 60

(Medical Xpress) -- Doctors will soon be able to identify the early stages of dementia in the 40 per cent of Parkinson's Disease (PD) patients in Australia who later develop the illness.

Researchers at Monash University, in collaboration with the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, are developing a test that can be administered by health professionals to accurately diagnose PD patients who have cognitive problems indicative of preclinical [dementia](#).

Principal investigator Dr. Audrey McKinlay, from the School of Psychology and Psychiatry, said treatment before clear symptoms arise could improve quality of life, reduce health care costs for PD patients

and alleviate the burden on caregivers.

“The 20-minute testing process would allow health practitioners to identify distinct characteristics, including memory loss, associated with the earliest, or preclinical, stages of dementia in PD patients,” Dr. McKinlay said.

“Identifying patients likely to develop dementia is important in early intervention where support can be provided to delay, or help patients to manage, the cognitive decline associated with dementia.

“Early intervention would reduce health care costs associated with home care, and importantly ensures individuals with PD and their families can get the most out of life.”

During a seven-year period [PD patients](#), with no evidence of dementia, were examined. In a trial, the test was able to correctly identify individuals in the preclinical stages of dementia with over 90 per cent accuracy.

Dr. McKinlay said there is currently no universally accepted set of tests for detection the cognitive problems in PD that may develop into dementia.

Affecting one in 100 Australians over the age of 60, Parkinson’s Disease is a progressive, degenerative neurological condition known for its effect on the control of body movements.

Researchers have recently begun to identify cognitive and psychiatric issues and assess the effects on quality of life for the patient and their caregivers.

It is hoped the development of an inexpensive and non-invasive testing

program will be implemented by health professionals in the future.

Provided by Monash University

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