

Re-learning words lost to dementia

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Ms Sharon Savage and a research participant.

A simple word-training program has been found to restore key words in people with a type of dementia that attacks language and our memory for words.

This ability to relearn vocabulary indicates that even in brains affected by dementia, some recovery of function is possible.

The study, led by Ms Sharon Savage at NeuRA ([Neuroscience Research Australia](#)), utilised a simple computer training-program that paired images of household objects such as food, appliances, utensils, tools and clothing, with their names

"People with this type of dementia lose [semantic memory](#), the [memory system](#) we use to store and remember words and their meanings," says Ms Savage.

"Even the simplest words around the house can be difficult to recall. For example, a person with this type of dementia usually knows what a kettle does, but they may not know what to call it and may not recognize the word 'kettle' when they hear it," she says.

Ms Savage found that after just 3 weeks of training for 30–60 min each day, patients' ability to recall the name of the items improved, even for patients with more advanced forms of the dementia.

"[Semantic dementia](#) is a younger-onset [dementia](#) and because sufferers lose everyday words life can be very frustrating for them and their families. By relearning some of these everyday words, day to day conversations around the house may become less frustrating, improving patient well-being," Ms Savage concludes.

This paper is published in the journal *Cortex*.

More information: www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S0010945212002997

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