

Dementia a growing concern for China and the world

June 17 2013



School of Medical Sciences Research Fellow Professor Wei Wang is the lead author of an important study analysing the number of Alzheimer's disease and dementia sufferers in China.

An ECU researcher is one of the lead authors of the first study analysing the increase in prevalence of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia in China.

ECU's School of Medical Sciences Research Fellow Professor Wei Wang is a co-lead and corresponding author on the study which was published in the prestigious medical journal, *The Lancet*.

The study found more than 9 million Chinese people have [dementia](#) compared with just 3.68 million 20 years earlier, more than any other country on earth.

The study raises important questions for China which Professor Wang believes will struggle to care for its millions of dementia sufferers in years to come.

The study also found the number of dementia sufferers in China is increasing at a rate far faster than expected in the country which is ill-equipped to deal with the problem.

The study analysed 89 academic studies spanning two decades searching for evidence of dementia sufferers.

In 1990 the study found there were 3.68 million people with dementia increased to 5.62 million by 2000 and 9.19 million by 2010.

The study's authors believe the increase is, in part, due to China's [ageing population](#) with dementia usually occurring over the age of 75.

It is complicated by the fact that women have a considerably longer [life expectancy](#) than men in China, making up about 75 per cent of the population over 85.

Furthermore, the large-scale migration of [young adults](#) from rural China to urban areas will leave large numbers of elderly people, especially women, living in rural areas alone.

Professor Wang said adequate resources needed to be provided at the national, local, family and individual levels to tackle what is a growing problem.

"Public awareness campaigns are needed to counteract common misconceptions about dementia in [China](#) - including that it is not very common in the Chinese population, that it is a normal part of ageing, or that it is better not to know about it because nothing can be done about it," Professor Wang said.

The study shows the burden of dementia will grow rapidly because of increased life expectancy in large low and middle income countries and should be a warning to other developing countries including India, Brazil and South Africa.

However Professor Wang said Australia was not immune to the growing problem of a huge increase in the number of Alzheimer's and dementia sufferers and urgent action needs to be taken to begin combat the problem.

The study has received worldwide media attention with more than 50 media reports within 24 hours of the launch of the publication and has helped to move the issue of dealing with the growing number of [dementia sufferers](#) worldwide into the spotlight.

The full study can be found at *The Lancet's* website.

More information: [\(13\)60221-4/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lan...)

Provided by Edith Cowan University

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