

# Grand-parenting keeps wheels turning

May 15 2014, by Anne Rahilly

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Grandparenting can improve cognitive function. Credit: Telegraph.co.uk

(Medical Xpress)—Postmenopausal women who took care of their grandchildren one day a week had better memory and faster cognitive speed than those who didn't, according to new research from the University of Melbourne.

The researchers however have a warning about over-using the generous nature of [grandparents](#) noting that [women](#) who cared for grandchildren five or more days a week had significantly slower processing speed and planning scores, possibly because they felt exhausted.

Results came from the Women's Healthy Ageing Project (WHAP) a longitudinal prospective study of more than 20 years in Melbourne women. Director of WHAP, Associate Professor Cassandra Szoeki from the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, said it is important to study the impact of grand-parenting on cognition.

"Social engagement, positive mood enhancement, ongoing learning and [mental stimulation](#) have all been shown to reduce the likelihood of getting Alzheimer's Disease. These are all important elements for warding off dementia and grand- parenting contains all these components," she said.

There is an increasing reliance on grandparents for childcare assistance in dual income families, so it is important to examine the impact for grandparents.

It was noted that women who were looking after their [grandchildren](#) five days a week, were more likely to report they felt demand from their children than the other women. Anxiety and stress can impair cognitive performance. Associate Professor Szoeki and her colleagues are now looking further into this.

Associate Professor Szoeki believes it is important to focus more on our health in later life, rather than disease and lack of function.

"Older people make significant contributions to our community, with the number of people who will live to over 100 estimated to rise globally by 1000% by 2050. The time to explore healthy ageing is now."

Provided by University of Melbourne

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