

Study provides clue to better treatment options for frontotemporal dementia

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A new study has revealed that the functional impairments experienced by people with frontotemporal dementia (FTD) may provide insight into effective behavioural management techniques to help them continue to look after themselves for longer.

Two key behavioural changes that are often seen in FTD are apathy and stereotypical behaviours.

The study, led by Claire O'Connor, revealed that individuals with high levels of apathy (reduced interest or motivation to do things) had much more difficulty completing their daily activities. For example, they were more likely to need reminding to have a shower, or to change their clothes every day.

In contrast, individuals with high stereotypical behaviours (rigid, specific daily routines), were managing their [everyday tasks](#) more effectively than those who had lower levels of these behaviours. This suggests that stereotypical behaviours may actually support the person to independently manage their everyday living tasks for longer.

Given the lack of cure or effective treatment options in [frontotemporal dementia](#), the development of effective intervention strategies remains crucial. In order to develop these strategies, we need to better understand the disease process itself. The results from O'Connor's study suggest that addressing behavioural changes should be a key focus of intervention, and may have benefits reaching beyond the behaviours themselves.

In future research, NeuRA plans to investigate the possibility of using behavioural management strategies for people with frontotemporal dementia and their carers. Through this we hope to learn better ways to manage behavioural changes and support carers in their role.

The study will be published in *Neurology: Clinical Practice* next month.

Provided by Neuroscience Research Australia

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