

Research sheds new light on the progression of dementia

March 10 2021



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A new study into dementia has identified markers which could help healthcare practitioners to understand how the disease progresses and improve treatment outcomes.

The [MEDDIP study](#), involving researchers from Newcastle University, aimed to assess whether information routinely recorded by GPs and nurses contains markers of early [dementia](#)-related health that may help to identify the progression of the disease.

The research, which was funded by the Dunhill Medical Trust, consisted of identifying a set of potential markers of dementia-related health by reviewing previous studies, speaking with practitioners, people with dementia and their caregivers, and analyzing primary care [medical records](#).

National database

The team used a UK-wide [primary care](#) database containing records of over 30,000 dementia patients and found that these markers were related to longer-term outcomes such as being admitted to hospital and dying earlier.

They also found that people having more of these markers tended to have worse dementia, as was measured in assessments completed by specialist dementia services.

Professor Dame Louise Robinson, from Newcastle University's Faculty of Medical Sciences, said: "GPs increasingly collect standardized, electronic patient information as part of usual clinical care.

"The [MEDDIP study](#) has nicely shown that such routine data can have a dual function as [research data](#) and be used to help develop markers to assess disease progression."

It is estimated that more than 850,000 people in the UK are currently living with dementia, and while previous research has looked at what factors increase the risk of developing dementia, less is known about

how it affects people over time once they have been diagnosed.

Identified markers

The markers identified in the records are grouped into 13 categories such as cognitive function, safety and daily functioning.

In practice, the markers may help to identify individuals who are at risk of a poorer long-term course of their dementia and may therefore benefit from more targeted treatment and care.

Some markers are modifiable and targeting these may also help alter the course of someone's illness.

Dr. Michelle Marshall, from Keele University's School of Medicine, who led the study, said: "Our study has given us an invaluable insight into the possibilities of tracking the progression of dementia.

"These markers may ultimately help identify individuals who are most at risk of a poorer long-term course of their dementia, and hence may benefit from more targeted treatment and care."

Provided by Newcastle University

Citation: Research sheds new light on the progression of dementia (2021, March 10) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-03-dementia.html>

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