

Eat Mediterranean to ward off dementia

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A southern European diet “is pre-eminent in preventing and slowing the progression of dementia”

A University of Liverpool scientist has called on the UK's Health Minister to promote Mediterranean-style eating to reduce the burden of dementia.

Simon Capewell, Professor of Clinical Epidemiology at the University's Institute of Psychology, Health and Society is a signatory to an open letter to Jeremy Hunt (Secretary of State for Health) ahead of G8 summit meetings next year. These meetings will discuss how to alleviate

the \$420 billion cost of [dementia](#) care to Western societies.

The scientists and doctors would like the minister to promote the benefits of eating fish, vegetables and olive oil alongside lower consumption of meat, sugar and alcohol – rather than focussing exclusively on medications.

The letter says: "Whilst we support efforts to promote research and development in medical treatments of the disease, we believe that there has been insufficient emphasis on the role of diet and lifestyle – factors which have been clearly shown to dramatically reduce risk of developing dementia. In particular, a Mediterranean-style diet is pre-eminent in preventing and slowing the progression of dementia."

With many scientific studies around the world showing clear benefits of a southern European diet, the signatories believe that this is a simple and effective way of reducing a burden on society and preventing more people suffering from a serious and traumatic condition.

The letter concludes: "It is widely acknowledged that a relatively small percentage of total health service spend is specifically ring-fenced for health promotion activity. We hope this crisis in dementia can be seen as an opportunity to lead to real policy change, namely towards a Mediterranean diet rather than towards the more dubious benefit of most drugs.

"We therefore call upon the outcome of the proposed G8 meetings concerning dementia to recognise the preventative role of the Mediterranean [diet](#). We urge governments and other agencies to develop and adopt a strategic approach which integrates the scientific knowledge, which has demonstrated such a compelling case, and to grasp these opportunities to reduce the burden of dementia."

Provided by University of Liverpool

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