



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

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£50m bid to tackle dementia

People at risk of dementia will benefit from a £50 million initiative to improve drugs that could prevent the condition.

Scientists from across Europe will collaborate to identify people at high risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and invite them to participate in trials of new drugs that could slow its onset.

Led by the University of Edinburgh, the team hopes to make a fundamental difference to the understanding and management of Alzheimer's disease in people with very early symptoms or none.

Previous attempts to bring new drugs for Alzheimer's disease to the market have been disappointing despite a high level of investment, researchers say.

However, the realisation that Alzheimer's disease is a progressive disorder and that early intervention may be more effective has led to research efforts being focused on prevention.

This latest initiative will establish a European-wide register of 24,000 people deemed at high risk of developing dementia.

Scientists hope that by identifying biomarkers - molecules in tissue or blood that indicate disease - they will detect people with early stage dementia even if they have no noticeable symptoms.

Those patients at highest risk will be invited to join trials of new preventative medicines.

Craig Ritchie, Professor of the Psychiatry of Ageing at the University of Edinburgh, said: "The UK is taking a leading role in the global fight to progress dementia research.

"This is a genuine game changer in the fight against dementia. By joining forces, scientists and pharmaceutical companies across Europe can deliver a real benefit to people at risk of this disease.

"Together, we can identify people at risk in their middle age, accelerate their treatment and offer a range of medical options rapidly within one same trial."

Ranked among the top universities in the world

The project, named the European Prevention of Alzheimer's Dementia Initiative (EPAD), involves 35 partners from the academic and private sectors and will initially run for five years.

In the UK, it also involves partners from the Universities of Cambridge, Oxford and Cardiff.

“This partnership confirms the UK’s position at the heart of the fight against dementia,” said Prof Ritchie.

“The Prime Minister’s Dementia Challenge, the Dementia Platform UK and now the leadership of the EPAD project reflect the commitment to develop the best possible environment to undertake the research that will make a difference to the care offered to people with dementia and to eventually prevent its development.”

EPAD is mainly sponsored by the European Commission and the European pharmaceutical industry under the auspices of the Innovative Medicines Initiative Joint Undertaking.

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