



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

News Release

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Dementia experts join forces in global bid to tackle disease

Dementia experts are forming the world's largest research group in the field to tackle the condition.

They hope to improve the detection, treatment and ultimately prevention of dementia by looking at the disease in the context of the whole body and not only the brain.

Investigator teams from eight UK universities – including the University of Edinburgh – are joining forces with industry experts from pharmaceutical and biotech companies to form the UK Dementia Platform (UKDP).

The team will study data from two million volunteers aged 50 and over who have taken part in existing research projects such as UK Biobank, a long term national health study.

Participants in these studies have generously provided a wealth of medical and lifestyle data which experts will examine alongside ongoing genetic studies, brain imaging and tests of mental skills.

Researchers hope to gain a better understanding of who is at risk of developing dementia, possible triggers for the disease, and what might speed or slow its progress.

The aim is to identify biological changes and shifts in thinking abilities that are linked to the condition. It is hoped that this could lead to earlier detection and improved monitoring of dementia and will help design better ways of testing new treatments.

Looking at the links between development of dementia and other factors – such as diet or illness – could also unearth targets for new treatments or new uses for existing drugs, experts say.

Data from the project will be made available to scientists around the world in a bid to accelerate progress in dementia research and encourage innovation.

The collaboration – which is being led by the Medical Research Council – was announced today (Thursday) by Prime Minister David Cameron in a speech at a summit of world health and finance leaders in London.

Ranked among the top universities in the world

Four of the 14 research leaders who will steer the project are from the University of Edinburgh, including scientists from the Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology, the Alzheimer Scotland Dementia Research Centre, Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences and The Roslin Institute.

Professor Ian Deary, Director of the Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology, said: “We are delighted that the University has the opportunity to take a leading role in such an important programme of research. Looking at dementia in the context of the whole body is one that we have already taken in our cognitive ageing studies in Edinburgh, and one that we hope will yield significant breakthroughs in this larger setting.”

Professor Cathie Sudlow of the Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences, who is also Chief Scientist at UK Biobank, said: “This initiative has the potential to make a significant global impact in the battle against dementia.”

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