



## The key to **DE-STIGMATISING** dementia is changing **PERCEPTION** page 6



# Alzheimers News

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## Correction

In the article *Why are we here* (page 12, *Alzheimers News* June 2010) it was incorrectly reported that Cynthia Brooks was nominated as Kiwibank New Zealander of the Year whereas Cynthia nominated Alzheimers Marlborough in the Mitre 10 Community of the Year category. In the caption accompanying the article the school children were from Mayfield School, not Mayfair.

## New look website

A news and research blog and links to social networking sites (such as Facebook and photo sharing website Flickr) are some of the features of Alzheimers New Zealand's redesigned website.

The site is still a work in progress, but through its continual development we hope to build a resource and information hub which supports the dementia community and informs the general public about dementia and how they can support the work of Alzheimers New Zealand.

If you have feedback and suggestions about the site, including its usability, please contact [cass.alexander@alzheimers.org.nz](mailto:cass.alexander@alzheimers.org.nz).

# News

## Date set for first subsidised dementia medication

Following government drug-buying body Pharmac's decision in May 2010 to subsidise the generic brand of dementia medication, Donepezil-Rex, a date of 1 November 2010 has been set for its availability. This date followed approval in mid-August from the New Zealand Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Authority (Medsafe).

This subsidy means a 98 per cent price reduction for the 15,000 New Zealanders Pharmac estimates will use the medication over the next three years. Donepezil-Rex can help slow progression of mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease and can improve memory, mood and cognitive ability.

Alzheimers New Zealand's national director Johan Vos hopes the reduction in cost will encourage people to get an earlier diagnosis from their GP.

"It is essential people with memory problems and cognitive function are properly diagnosed to determine whether or not they have Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Memory problems can be related to the side effects of medication or to depression, so it is important to determine the cause. If someone is facing Alzheimer's disease, a proper diagnosis enables them to access relevant support services and appropriate medication."

For more information about Donepezil-Rex, please talk to your doctor.



## Links

[www.alzheimers.org.nz](http://www.alzheimers.org.nz)

[www.flickr.com/alzheimersnz](http://www.flickr.com/alzheimersnz)

[www.facebook.com/alzheimersnewzealand](http://www.facebook.com/alzheimersnewzealand)

facebook

flickr





## New generic galantamine drug on market

Following the subsidy of Donepezil-Rex (more information on the previous page), another type of drug which works in much the same way is now available as a generic.

Mylan NZ Ltd's Galantyl™ Extended Release has just been launched and could mean up to a 40 per cent cost reduction for up to 200 New Zealanders.

Galantyl™, which contains, galantamine, the same active ingredient as Reminyl®, can help slow progression of mild to moderately severe dementia.

Galantyl™ has gone through the same rigorous procedure required of all medications in New Zealand. After a thorough evaluation and registration process, consent has now been granted for distribution in New Zealand.

The medication will be available in 8mg, 16mg and 24mg sustained release capsules, in packs of 28.

Galantyl™ is not subsidised by Pharmac but its availability as a generic should mean a significant saving for people with dementia and their families.

If you or someone in your family want to find out more, please ask your doctor or pharmacist.

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## Last on the list for drugs

New Zealand has come last on a list of 14 developed countries for its use of 11 certain medications, including one for dementia. The UK government study also ranked New Zealand as one of the lowest health care spenders.

However, Pharmac's decision in May this year to fund Donepezil-Rex should see approximately 15,000 New Zealanders benefit from an Alzheimer's disease medication over a three-year period.

New Zealand also came seventh for use of antipsychotic drugs; a debatable topic in the dementia community, where some residential care facilities have stopped issuing these drugs and instead have developed engaging care programmes to minimise agitated or aggressive behaviour.

According to the *Dementia Economic Impact Report 2008*, spending on dementia research in New Zealand is lower than in Australia and other OECD countries and it recommends an additional \$330 per person with dementia is spent per year.

## World Alzheimer's Day

World Alzheimer's Day (21 September 2010) brings together supporters from around the world to raise awareness about the growing number of people with dementia and how government and community must respond. Alzheimers New Zealand will send letters to GPs informing them of the importance of early diagnosis and how they can get in touch with our support services. We will also inform them of the date from which Pharmac is making Alzheimer's medication Donepezil-Rex available (1 November 2010) in the hope of encouraging early diagnosis.

A nation-wide campaign will publicise the rise of Alzheimers New Zealand clients and we will address issues around stigma. (Alzheimers New Zealand national director Johan Vos writes about stigma on page 6.)

Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) will release an updated *World Alzheimer Report*, containing new statistics on the global impact of dementia, including an estimated worldwide cost, the cost of direct and indirect medical care and formal and informal care.

Contact 0800 004 001 to find out what your local Alzheimers New Zealand organisation is doing and keep an eye out for ADI's new report on [www.alz.co.uk/adi/wad](http://www.alz.co.uk/adi/wad)

## Take a different view: Alzheimer's Australia's 14th National Conference

Alzheimer's Australia welcomes you to their 14th National Conference, held in Queensland from 17-20 May 2011. The conference will take a broader view of dementia's social, health and economic impact, focussing on identity, consumer rights, ethics, decision-making, best practice and what can be learned from other sectors and medical conditions. [www.alzheimers2011.com](http://www.alzheimers2011.com)



# Alzheimers New Zealand's Awa



Alzheimers New Zealand teams around the country joined forces with their dedicated supporters to promote awareness about the disease and to raise vital funds during the Annual Appeal and Awareness Week, 12 – 18 July. While many took to the streets shaking buckets, a plethora of events were hosted throughout the country, all creatively promoting the good work we do in our communities while emphatically profiling the impact of the disease.

This year the appeal followed the stories of Kiwi families and how dementia affects them. While the statistics were sobering, there was a strong and positive message about how the support and services of Alzheimers New Zealand relieves some of the burden. Progressive Enterprises continued their support of 'Cuppa for a Cause' by promoting this popular event throughout their stores and through Smart Shopper advertising with Richard Till, while Elite Pavlovas donated 20c from the sale of each pack of their lamingtons.

The success of the appeal is still being measured, with a final tally to be announced soon. A heartfelt thanks to all of the wonderful people who contributed this year – the volunteers, the collectors, the event organisers, the sponsors, the donors.... the list is really endless. We greatly appreciate your generosity.

## Event highlights

**Alzheimers Napier** celebrated the week with two performances; the Napier Repertory Players' *Let it Be Me*, which explored the relationship between a young woman whose aunt only recognises her as a child and Melody Inc's *Tribute to the Andrews Sisters*.



Both events raised funds and generated awareness for the organisation, which also held their official collection day on Friday 16 July. Labour List MP Stuart Nash, whose grandfather had dementia as a result of Parkinson's disease, helped to collect outside Farmers.

"Many of us have loved ones who are personally affected by dementia. I am very happy to support the work of the wonderful people at Alzheimers Napier and urge others to do so too," says Stuart.

After months of planning, **Alzheimers Marlborough** set up a world record breaking display of tea caddies for one big 'Cuppa for a Cause,' thanks to huge support from their community.

Local supporter Graham Brooks approached the organisation with the idea of displaying his 1,815-strong tea caddy collection as something to look at while people drank their tea.

To increase publicity, Graham registered with Guinness World Records for the largest and only collection of its kind in the world.

Committee members, friends, partners and volunteers unpacked 21 boxes, originally stored in Graham's chicken coop, for display at the historic Blenheim Club.

"Built in 1912, the club was an excellent venue, with a huge boardroom suitable for our display, along with a sitting room with an open fire for our guests to enjoy a cuppa and a lamington," says Alzheimers Marlborough's spokesperson Helen Knapp.

The event was covered extensively by local newspapers, the *Marlborough Express* and *Marlborough Midweek* as well as Radio New Zealand's *Afternoons* with Jim Mora. A Los Angeles based entertainment website even got in touch about the story!

"Over 500 people came to view the display and we had 109 people attend the official opening where Peter Wedde, an antiques specialist from Wellington who is originally from Marlborough, was our guest speaker. He took us all on a great trip down memory lane," says Helen.

She says the organisation reached more people this year with their activities, achieving their goal of raising awareness.

# ness and Appeal Week 2010

A nostalgic 'Cuppa for a Cause' event and a display of Cabbage Patch Dolls were highlights for **Alzheimers New Zealand Waikato**.

Educator Jane Kay thanks the organisations and individuals who organised 'Cuppas', collected on the streets and sold raffle tickets. Over 120 people attended a Radius St Joans 1940s and 1950s-style Nostalgia Afternoon Tea, where ladies wore fur stoles, hats and gloves and men dressed as gangsters and singers from the era.

"The afternoon tea of cucumber sandwiches, lamingtons, lemon tarts and melting moments were served on tiered china cake plates while the tea room was decorated in an authentic 1940s style with displays of memorabilia," says Jane.

A 140-strong Cabbage Patch Doll collection, displayed at loyal supporter Karen Ladd's home drew in the crowds, with donations going back to Alzheimers New Zealand Waikato.

"Amongst the more unusual Cabbage Patch Dolls was a spaceman and a vision-impaired doll with her guide dog. Some were scented and we even had a crying baby. Our grateful thanks goes to Karen for all her hard work and for opening her home to the public. We had girls and boys from age one to 100 years truly charmed by the collection.

Above all, Awareness and Appeal Week was a reminder of all the beautiful people in the Waikato who appear from nowhere and give their time and effort to this worthy cause," says Jane.



*Clockwise from left: Alzheimers Otago's Sharon Finnie, Colin Murray and Debbie Melton. Tea caddy collector Graham Brooks and antiques specialist Peter Wedde at Alzheimers Marlborough's recording breaking 'Cuppa'. An enthusiastic group of kids (8-12) help Alzheimers Taupo shake buckets. Labour List MP Stuart Nash and young supporters collect for Alzheimers Napier. Whāngarei District Councillor Vince Cocurullo and his wife Lee at a fundraising dinner held by Alzheimers Northland.*



*Alzheimers New Zealand national director Johan Vos, Fuji Xerox sales representative Maki Halikias and Senior Sergeant Bruce Johnston of the New Zealand Police draw the winner*

## Prize Draw Winner

The Annual Appeal and Awareness Week prize draw was drawn on 18 August under the watchful eye of a member of the New Zealand Police. The lucky winner was Amieleigh Hirini, of Taupo.

Ms Hirini has won a Fujifilm Finepix S1600, a fantastic camera very kindly donated by our friends at FujiXerox.

Thousand of entries were received in the draw, most from donations received during the street collections during the appeal. We look forward to having more prize draws in the future, so be sure to visit our website to see when the next one is happening.

[www.alzheimers.org.nz](http://www.alzheimers.org.nz)

Thanks to our friends at



# Are we all equal?

Alzheimers New Zealand's national director Johan Vos addresses stigma associated with dementia.

I recently met with leading psychogeriatrician (older person's psychiatrist) Dr Matthew Croucher of the Canterbury District Health Board and asked him what he sees as the biggest challenges for dementia. His first response was 'stigma'. I agreed with him that stigma is one of the most profound issues affecting people with dementia and their carers.

## Are we unintentionally supporting the very stigma we are trying so hard to break?

But how does stigma come into being? Who, or what developed stigma in the first place? And why don't we always accept people for who they are? Stigma is defined as a sign of social unacceptability or the shame or disgrace attached to something regarded as socially unacceptable. This definition sounds pretty harsh, but then again, stigma is harsh, unfair and unjust.



...Alzheimers New Zealand helps me keep my independence...  
Betty, 73

ALZHEIMERS NEW ZEALAND  
MAKES LIFE BETTER  
FOR ALL PEOPLE AFFECTED  
BY DEMENTIA

Help make life better for those living with dementia – support Alzheimers New Zealand  
Call 0900 4 1234 to make a \$20 donation

0800 004 001  
www.alzheimers.org.nz

Making life better for all people affected by dementia  
Kia piki te ora mo ngā tāngata mate pōrewarewa

One of Alzheimers New Zealand's campaign messages



depression helpline 0800 111 787

is this depression? what can cause it? find a way through stay well helping others



understanding more about depression will help you find a way through...

join JH's programme  
start

my journal

The Mental Health Foundation's www.depression.org.nz website featuring former All Black John Kirwin



Past definitions of 'dementia' have not helped either, with words like 'insanity' and 'madness' attached to its meaning. As an organisation, we prefer to call ourselves 'Alzheimers New Zealand' rather than 'Dementia New Zealand'. That made me think - are we unintentionally supporting the very stigma we are trying so hard to break?

I have heard horror stories of people with dementia kept inside for fear of embarrassing family members in public. Other stories include supplying antipsychotic medication to suppress 'unwanted' behaviours rather than engaging people in meaningful activities. Some people, including medical professionals, still see dementia as a normal part of aging.

As an organisation with a rich 25 year history of service to the community, part of our role is to advocate for people with dementia. In the last two decades, opinions and perceptions have changed somewhat, but by how much?

I admire the Mental Health Foundation in tackling the stigma associated with depression through its campaign fronted by rugby legend John Kirwin, who has lived with depression.

As a result, public perception of depression has changed and people are now more aware of symptoms, more forthcoming in getting the help they need and more willing to talk about it. Alzheimers New Zealand has been very well served by people such as Kate Clark and Al Morrison and Ray and Eileen Smith, who have spoken out about how the disease has impacted their lives.

As part of our People, Policy, Partnership conference in May this year, Heather Cameron, Alan Gibb and Kathie van Duyn sat in front of a 200-strong audience to explain the kinds of things they are confronted with in their daily lives; what they do to keep their cognitive function on track and how they access support from others.

The key to de-stigmatising dementia is changing perception. Once people understand what dementia really is, the day will come when it will be accepted, which in turn will mean more people are able to recognise the symptoms and get help sooner. Everyone involved in a journey with dementia has a responsibility to help change perceptions, including health professionals.

If you want to be part of an up-coming major campaign to reduce stigma, please contact:

Cass Alexander  
Communications Advisor  
04 381 2363  
cass.alexander@alzheimers.org.nz



## HOT TOPIC: *aged care*

Aged care has somewhat surprisingly proved to be a hot topic at the moment. Over

the last year or so several high profile incidents in aged residential care have made front page news. Equally, the cuts to home care services in several District Health Boards have provoked a storm of protest from those affected. Even Winston Peters has managed to find a way to combine his two favourite topics, his elderly constituency and xenophobia to launch his latest foray back into national politics.

Perhaps it should come as no surprise. As a society we are facing a significant ageing of the population. Many people, particularly baby boomers, are confronting the thorny issue of how to support their ageing parents and how to deal with the prospect of finding residential care for one or more of their parents. Indeed, the presence of dementia is the single biggest driver of admission into residential care when the resources of partners and families are often overwhelmed in the latter stages of the condition. At the same time, many of us are not quite sure what our options are, how much they will cost us, if at all, and how we should support our elderly to make these choices in an informed way.

Hopefully we might learn something from our failure to deal with the superannuation issue in a politically sensible fashion. The Labour Party, the Greens and Grey Power are conducting an inquiry into aged care and hope to produce a report this month.

While they have been focussing on the negative in their approach so far, at least they have recognised the need to confront the issue and come up with some solutions. Health Minister Tony Ryall by comparison, has been extremely reluctant to engage any further on aged care, apart from briefly fiddling with the audit process. Perhaps he is worried in a time of economic restraint, looking too closely will only open up a Pandora's Box of expectation.

One can understand why there is a mantra from the government that the focus for the country needs to be on creating economic wealth. The logic is, if we don't concentrate on the economy, we won't have the means for the social support most of us believe in. However, the demographic challenge is ticking and it will not go away. The almost complete absence of government strategy and policy, intelligent or otherwise, isn't going to provide much of a comfort blanket.

As a country we need to face up to this challenge in a much more mature fashion.

We need a national discussion now, on how we are going to meet the challenge of community and residential care for the elderly, preferably supported by a multi-party commitment. Most of the community understand the government cannot be expected to do and pay for everything. Just as in the superannuation issue, we recognise that individuals and families have a role to play alongside industry and government but we desperately need some constructive political leadership to move the discussion forward.

*Dwayne Crombie is the CEO of Bupa Care Services*

## Cognitive Stimulation Therapy

Those with early stage dementia in the Hawke's Bay region are benefiting from a cognitive stimulation therapy (CST) programme, the first of its kind outside the United Kingdom. CST utilises multi-sensory stimulation and reminiscence therapy to help maintain cognitive function. Initially it will run twice-weekly, for seven weeks followed by weekly sessions for six months. The Hawke's Bay District Health Board (DHB) is running this programme in conjunction with Alzheimers Hastings and Alzheimers Napier.

Research suggests CST can be as effective as cholinesterase inhibitors (one of the more common medication prescribed for Alzheimer's disease). Alzheimers Hastings' manager Donna Hedley says participants have noted significant improvement in their quality of life. Due to small group sizes, she says supportive relationships have been created with others facing the same challenges.

Alzheimers Hastings and Alzheimers Napier will maintain the programme after the initial phase and trained staff will incorporate some of the skills from CST into their regular day programme.

Each session has a tangible focus and ensuring there is consistency and continuity between sessions minimises confusion and can help to aid memory recall, says CST therapist Marie Mclean.

"The CST programme aims to give people a chance to learn and strengthen their existing resources and function at their maximum capacity. This is achieved through implicit rather than explicit learning. For example, people are asked for their opinions rather than to provide factual answers and multi-sensory stimulation is used to stimulate all the senses. Reminiscence is also integrated into the programme, partly used as a means to orientate to the here and now," says Marie.

Donna says the programme has empowered people with dementia to engage in helpful activities in a structured form as well as allowing carers to network with others in a similar situation. "Often at the early stage of the disease, people feel they are not ready for our service, so this provides a medium to help people access us."

Donna says the collaborative approach with the DHB helps meet Alzheimers New Zealand's mission of making life better for all people with dementia.

## News from around the world

### Diagnose early to save costs

*USA:* Identifying dementia as early as possible could cut 30 per cent from the cost associated with dementia care health in the USA. In a trial at Minneapolis Veterans Medical Center over 8,000 patients aged over 70 were routinely screened with a two-minute memory test. The 26 per cent of patients who failed this test were tested for dementia. Those diagnosed with dementia were offered a care plan and their health costs were tracked for a year, saving an average of \$1,700 annually per patient.



### Palliative care

*International:* New Zealand has the third best palliative care in the world, following Australia and Britain, according to a new report by *The Economist* magazine's Intelligence Unit. The report also says palliative care is inadequate worldwide due to cultural taboos, government avoidance, untrained health workers and little public awareness. The director of the report says palliative care focuses on 'curative' as opposed to end-of-life-care and hopes the findings will create debate and help address some of the inadequacies.

### Matching people to trials

*USA:* Over 100 clinical trials are underway in the US currently, but researchers say recruitment is always difficult. Thus, a new internet and phone based service has been created to match participants with the right kind of trial. TrialMatch is an individualised and user-friendly guide to trials which combines support from health professionals, caregivers and volunteers. The Alzheimer's Association of America says finding people for trials is secondary only to funding in terms of holding back development of the second generation of Alzheimer's disease medications.

### Early Onset Study

*Australia:* The New South Wales government has earmarked \$250,000 toward a two-year study on early onset dementia (people aged 45 plus) to assess their needs in order to maintain quality of life. The New South Wales branch of Alzheimer's Australia will run the study.



## Our special focus is caring for people with dementia

Bupa offers 45 care homes throughout New Zealand, 16 of which offer specialist dementia care.

We focus on making each day the best it can be for our residents. It is often the small things that matter the most, and each staff member tries to make everyday special for someone. We welcome the close involvement of friends and family so that we can best understand the person we are caring for. We make sure there's room for individual choices in all that we do - its part of how we show our respect, and its part of how we care.

Phone 0800 60 80 99 Visit [www.bupa.co.nz](http://www.bupa.co.nz)



# YOUNG PEOPLE and dementia

Young New Zealanders Tamati (6) and Ryan (12) featured in this year's Awareness and Appeal Week campaign as people strongly affected by dementia, regardless of age. We bring you the latest news about how younger people are supporting and celebrating their elders in New Zealand and around the world.



## Te Mahara on tour

Delegates at the Alzheimers New Zealand People, Policy, Partnership conference in May this year saw a stellar performance by young woman Kristyl Neho, whose one-woman show, *Te Mahara (The Memory)* portrayed several characters in one whānau affected by their grandmother's dementia. *Te Mahara*, directed by Nina Nawalowalo, will travel throughout schools in the North Island during September and October this year. The tour includes public performances at the New Zealand Drama School Toi Whakari in Wellington in mid-September and at the Assembly Rooms in Hastings on 1 October in time to help promote World Alzheimer's Day. For more information about performances, please contact [cass.alexander@alzheimers.org.nz](mailto:cass.alexander@alzheimers.org.nz).



Kristyl Neho  
in *Te Mahara*

## Online support for teens



AFA Teens, a division of the Alzheimer's Foundation of America, reaches out to teenagers throughout the world affected by dementia via online networking and information-sharing resources. They have a 400-plus fanbase on Facebook (<http://tiny.cc/pj3m4>) as well as a regular blog which combines the experiences of teenagers with expert advice on dementia.

[www.afateens.org](http://www.afateens.org)  
<http://afateens.blogspot.com/>

## Giving kids and families a hand in tough times

Skylight is a national, not-for-profit charitable trust which supports children, young people, families and adults affected by change, loss, trauma and grief. They help people live with life's losses, build on their natural resilience and move forward.

Part of their work is to equip people who support others through resources, information, tailored education and professional development.

Their extensive library (from which you can borrow or purchase resources) focuses on real life issues, their impact on individuals and families and how to effectively manage them, whatever a person's age or stage in life.

Counselling and support groups are also offered in the greater Wellington area.

Skylight has books about dementia and Alzheimer's disease such as *Always my Grandpa* (reviewed on the next page), *Striped Shirts and Flowered Pants* and *Mile-High Apple Pie*. They also produce the carer's book, *Rain Hail or Shine: Exploring change, loss and grief in a carer's world*.

Check out Skylight's helpful, practical website, [www.skylight.org.nz](http://www.skylight.org.nz) which includes an online shop with over 200 resources.

0800 299 100  
[support@skylight-trust.org.nz](mailto:support@skylight-trust.org.nz)



# Review

## Always My Grandpa: A Story for Children about Alzheimer's Disease

By **Linda Scacco**

Illustrated by **Nicole Wong**

This heart-warming story, so colourfully illustrated, will appeal to children six to 10 years old and their families. Daniel's Grandpa lives in a house by the sea and Daniel and his mother visit every summer.

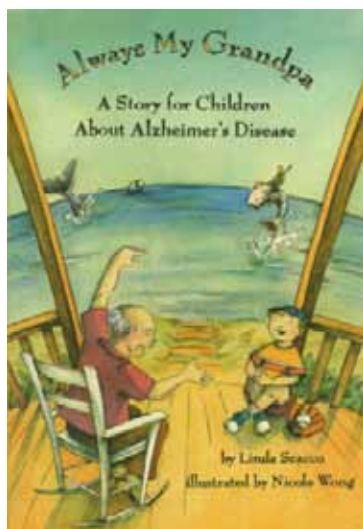
However, this summer things are different as Grandpa has Alzheimer's now. In this touching story, Daniel learns from both his mother and Grandpa about this disease.

He finds out that it not only affects his grandfather but also his own thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Daniel expresses sadness, anxiety, anger and sometimes embarrassment too.

But he also finds out that even though Grandpa forgets, Daniel can still keep remembering the stories Grandpa told him. He learns that he can now become the storyteller of those wonderful stories.

There is also a very useful section for adults at the back explaining how to help children better understand Alzheimer's and its effect on the family.

*This book was reviewed by Skylight's volunteer librarian Sheryl Bain. More information about Skylight appears on the previous page.*



## A New Way to Manage Wandering

It happens. Wandering puts your loved one at risk of becoming lost or having a serious accident - not to mention the stress and worry it causes you and your family. Fortunately, now there is a solution.

Due for release in October, WanderShield is a new product that instantly alerts you when your loved one wanders from home. It uses an ordinary-looking wristwatch to detect wandering and a home 'base station' that plugs into a phone line.



WanderShield  
Wristwatch

Designed for people who live with:

- Dementia / Alzheimer's
- Autism Spectrum
- Developmental Disabilities
- Children

- ✓ Protects your loved one from the risks of wandering
- ✓ Alerts you instantly when wandering occurs
- ✓ Tells you if the watch is taken off
- ✓ Looks like a watch, not a monitoring device

Register your interest before 15 October and receive a **\$200 discount** when you order!

To register your interest or for more information visit:

**[www.wandershield.co.nz](http://www.wandershield.co.nz)**

Or call us on **0800 806 472**



Safeguarding **People Who Wander**

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# Nutrition and Alzheimer's disease



**Gaye Philpott** is a registered dietitian who has practiced in and around Palmerston North for the past 16 years. Prior to that she worked at Christchurch Hospital before travelling, working overseas and having children. Fifteen years ago Gaye was asked if she would do some work for a residential care home in Levin and ever since she

has had a keen interest in the nutrition of older adults.

She monitors trends as people get older and their nutritional needs become more complex as well as regularly auditing menus in aged care facilities and providing advice and training for fellow health workers in residential and aged care. She also works one-on-one with individuals and families in her practice, Nutrition Matters.

Gaye is also the chairperson of Dietitians NZ's Special Interest Group for Nutrition of Older Adults and writes regularly for *INsite* (a magazine published by APN for aged care facilities).

[www.nutritionmatters.co.nz](http://www.nutritionmatters.co.nz)

Alzheimer's disease is such an emotive disease. For those watching and caring for loved ones with this condition it can be heartbreaking. For those who are themselves experiencing the early stages of the disease or who know they have a strong family history of the disease, it can be very scary.

And with no known cure and limited treatment options we are greedy to find ways and means to reduce the risk of this disease and minimise its progress. Food too is an emotive subject. We all have personal beliefs about nutrition and how it affects our health and well-being. These beliefs may be based on personal experience, what our family and friends tell us or what we read.

As individuals, we may choose to adapt our food and nutrient intake based on what we believe but before health professionals can make specific recommendations they need proof that what they recommend will have the effect they say it will, but without causing other detrimental outcomes. This is referred to as evidence-based practice and is reliant on robust scientific process.

Alzheimer's disease is a condition of the brain where the cells (neurons) degenerate and no longer function as effectively as they once did.

It is also a progressive disease, which means brain function continues to deteriorate over time. Both genetics and environmental factors influence its onset and progression.

So how might food and its nutrients affect Alzheimer's disease? Food is an environmental factor and there are several mechanisms by which it might influence this condition.

It is possible a lack of some nutrients may be responsible. Studies have found low levels of some nutrients specifically associated with cognitive loss do occur in people with Alzheimer's disease. However, what needs to be proven is that reversing these deficiencies prevents the onset or halts the progression of this condition.

Consuming extra amounts of specific nutrients could also have a protective effect on brain health. Because Alzheimer's disease affects older rather than younger people, it has been proposed that the oxidative and inflammatory stress of the aging process may be responsible for the degeneration of brain cells.

A number of animal and laboratory studies have shown antioxidants (vitamins C and E and beta-carotene) and omega-3 fatty acids (a polyunsaturated fatty acid) can protect the brain from such damage, but as yet there is insufficient data from human studies to back these claims.

You may well be thinking that there is surely no harm in taking supplementary doses of these 'goodies'. And in regard to omega-3 this would be fair comment.

However, research cautions the use of supplementary doses of antioxidants as detrimental effects such as increased rates of some cancers have been observed. This is not to say that antioxidants don't play an important role in health, just that it is better when they are consumed in the amounts present in a healthy diet.



So while specific nutrients show promise in counteracting the effects of aging by promoting brain health, there is not yet sufficient evidence to recommend supplementary doses of specific nutrients or special dietary treatments for those with, or at risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Until there is, the message remains: eat a healthy diet low in animal fats, which includes plant based oils and whole grain breads and cereals, rather than refined versions. Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily, at least two servings of food made from milk (preferably reduced fat choices) and one to two servings of foods from the meat group, including fish once or twice per week.

In future articles I will be discussing components of a healthy diet in more detail.

## 5+ A Day® Roast Vegetable Salad

### Ingredients

(diced into 2cm cubes)

2 medium potatoes  
1 kumara  
2 carrots  
1 pepper red or green (or mix it up)  
1 red onion  
8 cloves garlic  
1 teaspoon rosemary or thyme, or both  
1 tablespoon olive oil

### Salad dressing:

6 tablespoons of olive oil  
2 tablespoons of balsamic vinegar  
¼ teaspoon crushed garlic  
½ teaspoon dijon mustard  
Cracked black pepper

### To finish

½ cup feta or other cheese  
2 tablespoons pine nuts (toasted)  
1 cup spinach leaves



Preheat oven to 220°C. Prepare vegetables. Leave garlic whole and cut larger vegetables into 2cm square cubes. Toss vegetables in oil. Spread one layer of the root vegetables onto roasting tray. Sprinkle with herbs. Try not to crowd the vegetables.

Place root vegetables in oven and roast for 10 minutes shaking the tray from time to time. Add the softer vegetables and cook for another 10-15 minutes. The cooking time will vary depending on your choice of vegetables.

Place the roasted vegetables on a platter and mix through the spinach leaves. Combine salad dressing ingredients and drizzle over salad. Top with nuts and feta cheese. Serve on a platter hot or cold. Serves 4

# Review

## Last Words:

### Approaches to death in New Zealand's cultures and faiths

Compiled by Margot Schwass

Reviewed by Vivienne Boyd

This book was commissioned by the Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand to acknowledge the ways in which different groups in New Zealand approach death.

In the first chapter Margot Schwass outlines common concerns about death. This is followed by a chapter on tikanga Māori perspectives, made up of two parts: *Death, dying and grief*, contributed by Paratene Ngata, et al, followed by *Contemporary Perspectives* from Sharon Clair, Haami Piripi and Papaarangi Reid.

After an overview chapter by Margot Schwass about New Zealand migrant communities, following chapters outline beliefs and practices relating to dying and death, as described by representatives of a range of cultures and faiths such as Brethren, Buddhist, Indian and Judaism. The communities chosen were those identified in the 2001 Census as significantly different from mainstream cultures as well as Christian denominations and the world's other major religions. Subsections within each chapter include approaches to death, preparing for the funeral and beyond death.

The book's final chapter was contributed by Tricia Irving, author of *Rain, hail or shine: Exploring change, loss and grief in a carer's world*. She writes about the tasks of grief, common reactions and factors that influence the way we grieve.

This book is intended to be used as a handbook. It is of relevance to all of us as we live and interact with more people of diverse cultures and faiths and as we face their mortality and our own.



Our regular reviewer Vivienne Boyd has a background in adult education. She is currently the education coordinator at Alzheimers Canterbury. Vivienne is also a registered diversional therapist who has worked with people with dementia in both community and residential settings.

## Into the 'hog money' fund!

Tom and Karen Brenner are consultants and trainers from Illinois, USA who work in aged care. Tom is a gerontologist specialising in dementia-specific training programmes while Karen is a Montessori educator. This article originally appeared as a post on Bob DeMarco's *Alzheimers Reading Room* blog.  
[www.alzheimersreadingroom.com](http://www.alzheimersreadingroom.com)  
[www.brennerpathways.org](http://www.brennerpathways.org)

We work with people living with Alzheimer's in all sorts of settings and we find people who are still curious and able to learn. We also find people who teach us so much! When we first started we thought we would be the ones doing all of the giving. To our great surprise, we discovered we receive much more than we give. We have received the gifts of wisdom, humour and courage from so many people we met who are living with Alzheimer's.

From Joe, a 94 year old farmer, we learned the importance of creating and sticking to a simple plan for success in life. Joe started farming in the Great Depression of the 1930s. He and his wife learned to live on just what they earned selling their milk and eggs. They saved all of the money they made from selling their hogs.

They never touched the 'hog money', even when times grew very, very lean. Eventually, they were able to save enough money for a down payment on the farm they were renting. Before too many years, they were able to buy it. Joe's simple lesson taught us the importance of staying true to your dreams, even when times are very rough. Joe never remembered our names, but he knew we appreciated the life lessons he shared with us.

We helped Joe re-learn to zip his jacket and to hold eating utensils by introducing him to Montessori tools which promote eye hand coordination.

Helping people stay as independent as possible, for as long as possible is one of our goals. Joe, a very independent person who had lived an active outdoor life, was very happy when he learned once again how to be successful in some basic self help skills. Joe was very happy when he could zip his own jacket again and he was even happier when he could share some of the wealth of wisdom he collected over his long life. We have a saying in our house now, "this cheque will go into the hog money fund!"

# Research



## Vitamin D

During these cooler winter and spring months it is important your skin sees some sun. People over the age of 65 with low levels of vitamin D are 60 per cent more likely to have memory and cognition problems and 31 per cent more likely to have problems with mental flexibility.

An estimated one billion people worldwide have low levels of vitamin D, which has concerned researchers who suggest supplements, already proven to help reduce the rate of falls and fractures, could also help retain cognitive function.

The study was conducted on 850 Italians aged 65 or older and published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* journal. Vitamin D is a natural by-product of the skin's exposure to the sun and can also be found in foods such as oily fish.

## Diabetes and vascular dementia

Researchers who studied Americans with Mexican ancestry found people with diabetes who develop dementia will more likely develop a vascular type, as opposed to the plaques and tangles associated with Alzheimer's disease.

The research, conducted by the Mayo Clinic in the USA, was presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease 2010. The research suggests dementia could potentially be avoided if the development of diabetes was prevented.

## Sleeping problems increase dementia risk

People with rapid eye movement sleep behaviour disorder (RBD) are more likely to develop dementia with Lewy bodies, Parkinson's disease or multiple system atrophy (a neurological disorder associated with the degeneration of nerve cells) later in life, according to a study of 27 individuals. Researchers are not yet sure how the two are correlated, but 63 per cent of participants with RBD developed a neurological disease, some up to 50 years later. The findings were published in the online issue of *Neurology*.



## Blood test in development

Researchers at King's College London have developed a blood test they hope may be able to detect Alzheimer's disease up to ten years before it is diagnosed. In New Zealand, medical professionals diagnose dementia through a series of cognitive tests, including the Mini Mental State Examination or by eliminating all other possibilities. The new blood test, which measures levels of a blood protein called clusterin, may be available in the UK in as little as three years.

Head researcher Simon Lovestone said one of the hardest factors in diagnosing dementia is determining the difference between non-

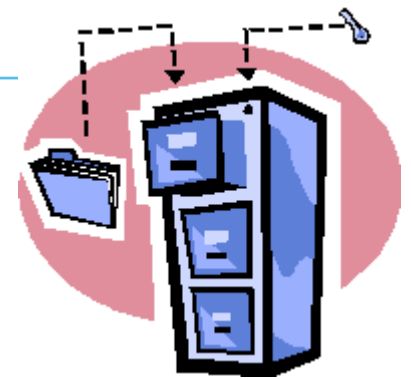
progressive memory problems and those which may indicate Alzheimer's disease.

Lovestone also said the test would be "as cheap as chips" but geriatrician Dr Phil Wood of the Memory Clinic in Auckland says the test is not likely to represent a 'one test is all you need' means of diagnosis, at least not at present.

However, he says it is an important study which could benefit from further research. Dr Wood says people should be following a healthy lifestyle and getting enough exercise to reduce their risk of Alzheimer's disease.

## Memories

A new study appears to have found one of the key proteins responsible for making memories, potentially leading to new treatments for people with Alzheimer's disease. Researchers at the University of Leicester discovered a protein in the front of the brain called the M3-muscarinic receptor, which must be activated in order for a memory to be stored.



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