

# **Dementia Matters: a practical approach to assessment and nursing care**

## **Session 1**

**This webinar will start shortly.**

# **Dementia Matters: a practical approach to assessment and nursing care**

## **Session 1**

**Zoom webinar – Tuesday 10 June 2025**  
**6.30-8pm**

# Acknowledgement of traditional owners

We acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners and ongoing custodians of the land on which we are meeting today. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We would also like to acknowledge Aboriginal people who are joining us today.



# Some housekeeping

- Tonight's webinar is being recorded
- Please use the Zoom Q&A feature to ask questions
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<https://www.primaryhealthtas.com.au/for-health-professionals/events/>



# Presenters



**Caroline Gibson**



**Professor Dimity Pond**

# Dementia Matters

## Part 1

A practical approach to assessment and care for people living with dementia for the primary care nurse (PCN)

Caroline Gibson and Dimity Pond

Dementia Training Australia is supported by funding from the Australian Government under the Dementia Training Program.



Dementia  
Training  
Australia®

DTA would like to show our respect and acknowledge the traditional custodians of these lands. We extend this respect to elders' past, present and emerging, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We also pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living with dementia and their carers.



Commonwealth of Australia

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# Learning Outcomes

After participating in this training, you will be able to:

## Part 1

Describe why knowing about dementia matters

Explain the importance of understanding dementia

Recognise key features and main characteristics of dementia

Recognise potential indicators of cognitive change

Explore the impact of cognitive change on function

## Part 2

Discuss how to have a conversation about cognition with patients and your medical team

Apply a person-centred, team-based approach to identify potential health care needs.

Develop strategies to support individuals living with a cognitive change and/or chronic disease (diabetes)

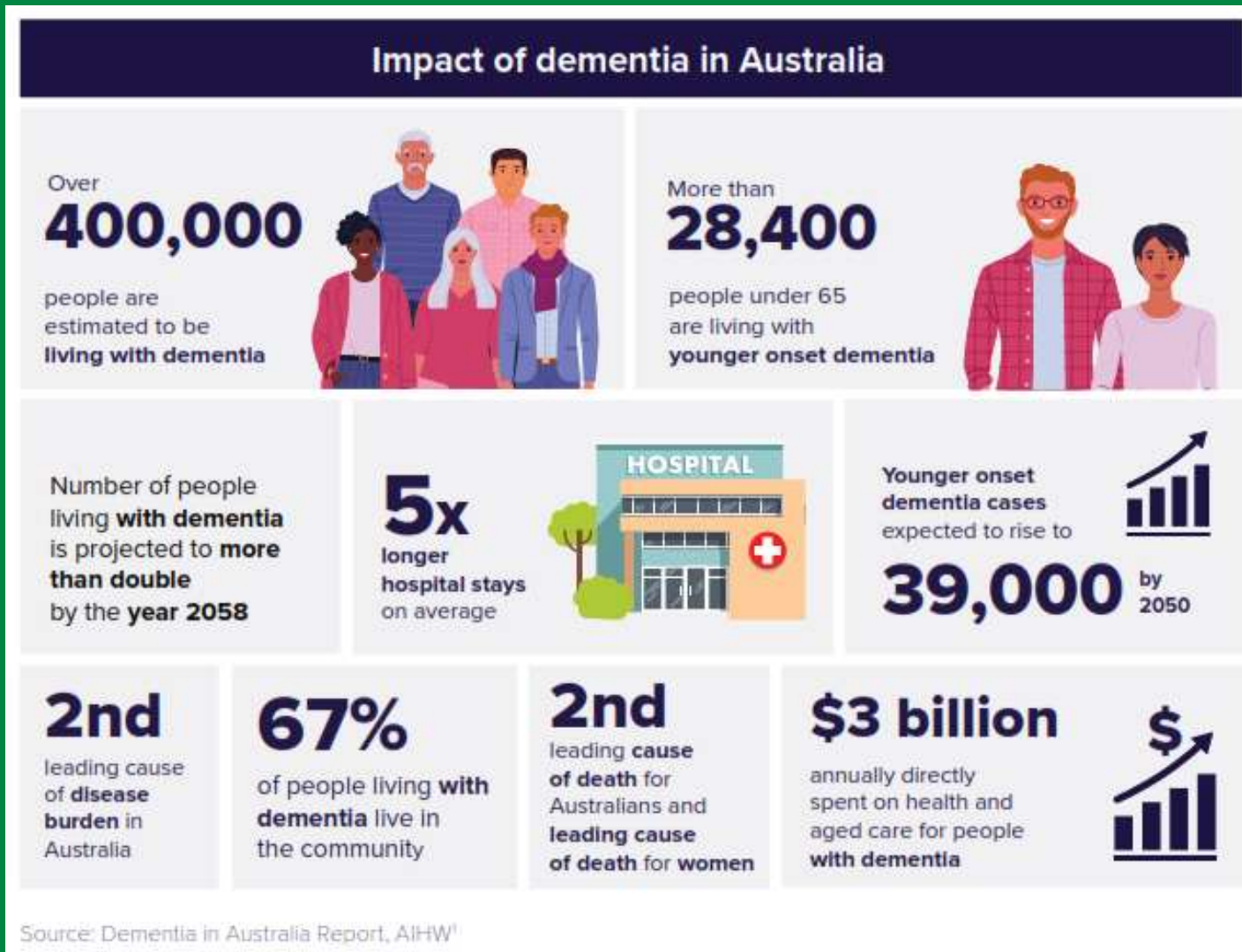
Self-care – looking after patients with dementia

# Dementia Matters



# Impact of Dementia in Australia

Graphic source: DHAC (Department of Health and Aged Care) (2024) *National dementia action plan 2024–2034*, DHAC, Australian Government, accessed 7 February 2025.



# Knowing About Dementia Matters Because

People living with dementia have 4+ chronic co-morbidities and poorer health and well-being outcomes compared with those without dementia.

Carer(s) of people living with dementia have higher levels of stress, depression and other comorbidities compared with other carer(s).

You will be seeing more and more people living with dementia and the people supporting them in your daily practice





[The unspoken impact of dementia Dementia Australia](#) Used with permission.

# The View of People Living with Dementia and Carers on Why Recognition and Diagnosis Matters



Photo by CDC on Unsplash

Research suggests a significant number of people want to know if they have dementia

Patients with adequate support can cope with the disclosure of a diagnosis and over time negative reactions can be outweighed by gains from the positive aspects of disclosure

Pond, D. Phillips, J. Day, J. McNeil, K. 2019. Communicating: Diagnoses and Consultations for People with Dementia. NHMRC Partnership Centre for Dealing with Cognitive and Related Functional Decline in Older People (CDPC) and University of Newcastle, Australia <https://cdpc.sydney.edu.au/research/care-service-pathways/primary-care-consensus-guide/>

## Activity – Group Discussion

Why is primary care important in the care of people living with dementia and carer(s)?

What are potential barriers to dementia recognition, assessment and management in primary care?

# Why are PCN's Important in Dementia Care

- Create strong trusting relationships with their patients/clients
- People report they can tell nurse anything
- Routine conversations, health assessments, care plans and treatment are opportunities to notice cognitive changes
- May see changes before doctors do
- Can report changes to GP to trigger assessment



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# What is Dementia

# Key Features of Dementia

The cognitive changes **must interfere** with a person's ability to complete usual daily tasks

The cognitive change is **not attributable to other causes**

The cognitive change is **progressive**

Is not a normal part of ageing

People in their 40s and 50s can have dementia.

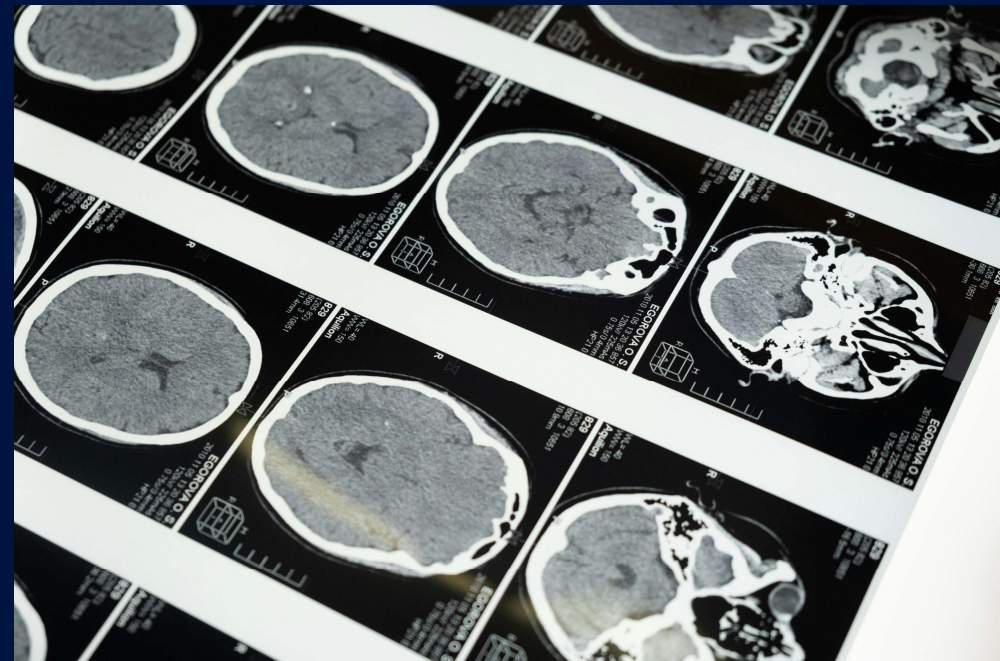


Image: Photo by cottonbro studio, Pexels, Royalty free

# What Causes Dementia?

Dementia is caused by a variety of diseases that result in damage to brain cells.

This damage interferes with the ability of brain cells to communicate with each other.

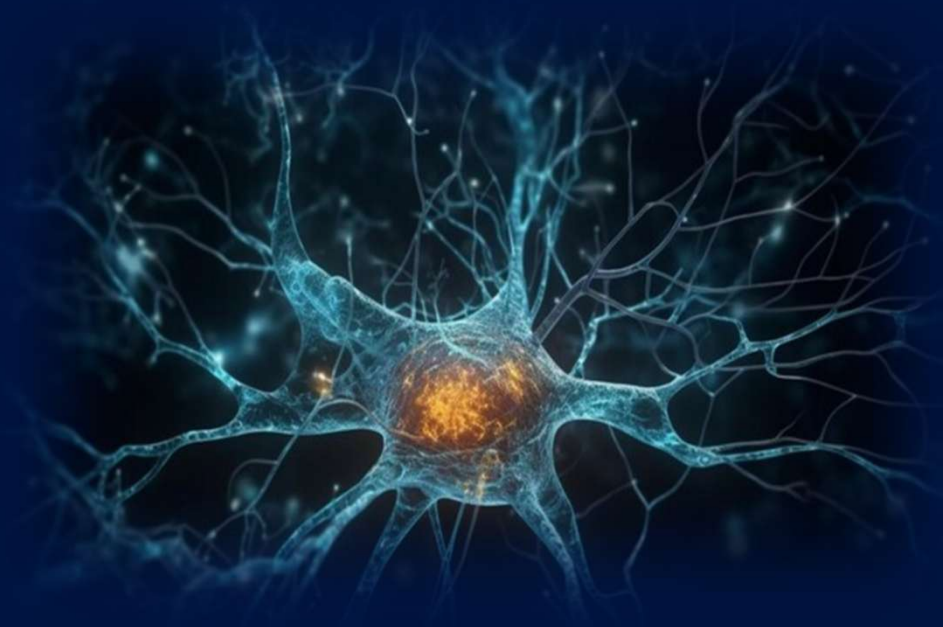


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# Dementia is Different for Everyone

## Frontal lobe

Problem-solving  
Personality  
Language

## Temporal lobe

Understanding language  
Sequencing  
Memory  
Learning

## Parietal lobe

Spatial & visual  
perception  
Language  
Writing

## Occipital lobe

Visual interpretation &  
perception  
Reading

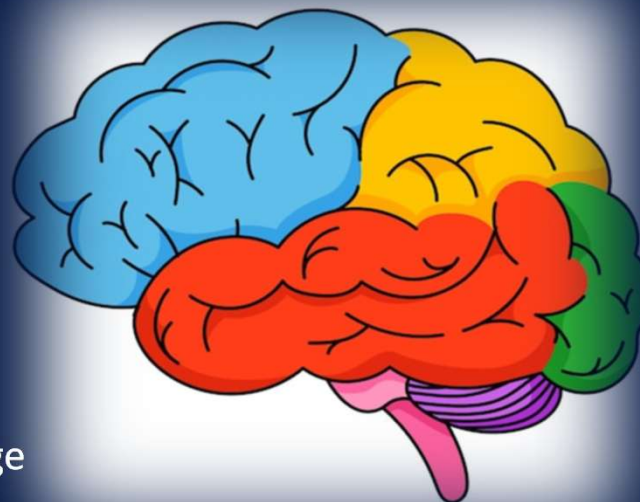


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# Dementia

An umbrella term used to describe a collection of brain diseases and their symptoms, including memory loss, impaired judgement, personality changes, and difficulty performing daily tasks.

**ALZHEIMER**  
**CALGARY**

it's still **me** in here

## Alzheimer's Disease



**60-70%**  
of dementia cases

## Vascular Dementia



**10-20%**  
of dementia cases

## Frontotemporal Dementia



**10%**  
of dementia cases

## Lewy Body Dementia



**5%**  
of dementia cases

## Other Dementias



**5%**  
of dementia cases

Graphic source: Alzheimer Society of Calgary (2025) [Types of dementia](#), Alzheimer Society of Calgary website, accessed 7 February 2025.

# The Role of Cognitive Assessment Tools

Are not diagnostic

Different questions cover different cognitive domains

Do not replace taking a good history – observing, listening

...

An objective measure that describes your concerns

May quantify change over time

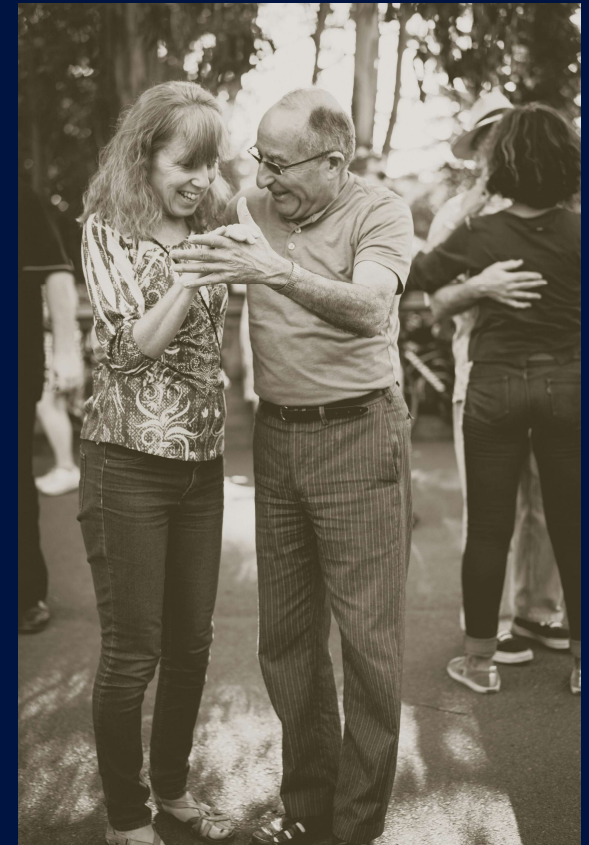


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# Different Personas of Dementia that You May See in Your Clinic

# Alice



## Possible Alzheimer's Dementia

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Forgetting things as soon as she is told

Frustrated and anxious

Having difficulty finding the right words (aphasia)

Episodes of not recognizing familiar friends (agnosia)

Her daughter says the changes have been gradual and are getting worse over time

# Mary

Walking slower

Poor initiative

Some incontinence

Lowered mood

Poor registration

Memory not too bad

She seems to be worse after each hospitalisation



Possible  
Vascular Dementia

Photo by [Jixiao Huang](#) on [Unsplash](#), Royalty free





## Possible Lewy body dementia

### James

Shuffling gait and falls

Bad dreams and restless at night

Hallucinations, usually not distressing

Difficulty with using cutlery and dressing  
(apraxia)

Cognition fluctuates, some days can seem  
quite good

Photo by [JD Mason](#) on [Unsplash](#), Royalty free

# Clive

Responds “I don’t know” to most questions

Not engaging in usual activities

Equally poor short-term and long-term memory

Maybe depression (not dementia)

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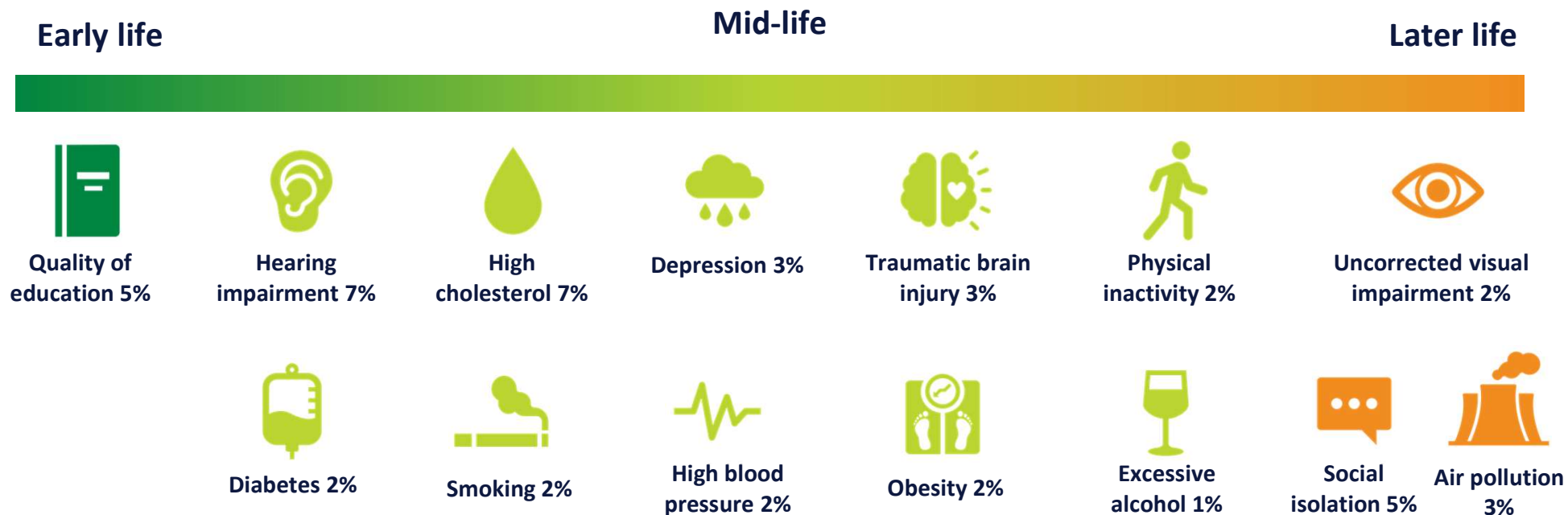


# Brain Health Promotion

## A Role of Primary Care An Opportunity for Primary Care Nurse



# Risk Factors for Dementia



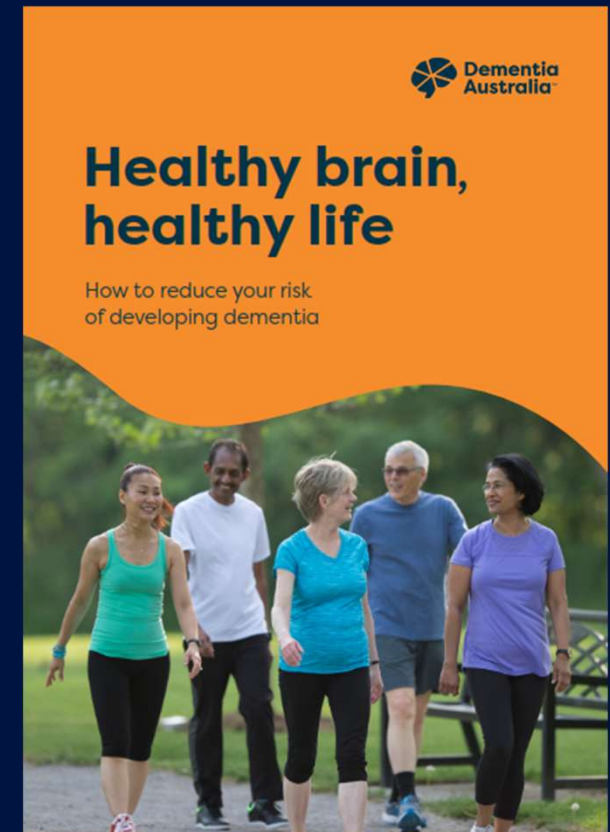
The percentage figure refers to the reduction in worldwide cases if this risk factor were eliminated.

In AUS, a 1% reduction = 4,200 people.

Adapted from the Lancet Standing Commission on Dementia Prevention, Intervention and Care, 2024.

# Dementia Risk Reduction

- Look after your heart
- Follow a Mediterranean diet
- Stay physically active
- Get a good night's sleep
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco and drugs
- **Protect your head and avoid injury**
- **Stay social**
- Exercise your brain
- Manage depression
- **Optimise hearing and vision**



Source: Dementia Australia. <https://www.dementia.org.au/brain-health/reducing-your-risk-dementia>

# Recognising a Change in Cognition

## A Role of Primary Care

### An Opportunity for Primary Care Nurse



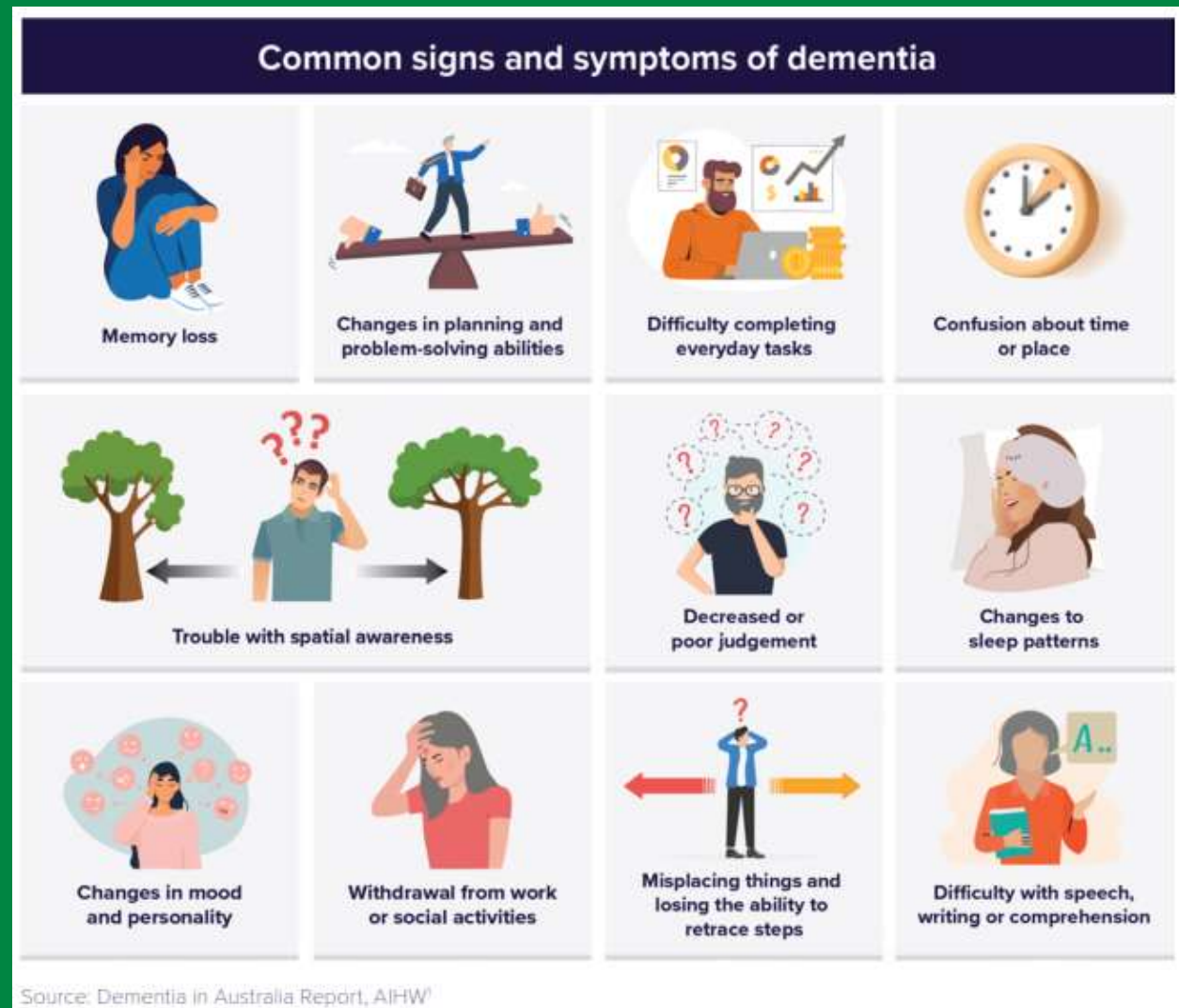
## Activity – Video

People living with Alzheimer's and their carers share some of the first signs of cognitive change they experienced or observed



Reproduced with permission from Better Health Channel © 2024 State of Victoria

# Common Signs and Symptoms



Graphic source: DHAC (Department of Health and Aged Care) (2024) [National dementia action plan 2024–2034](#), DHAC, Australian Government, accessed 7 February 2025.



Mr Villiers tripped 6 weeks ago in the garden causing a large skin tear on his calf. The wound is not healing. The skin flap has deteriorated, and you observe a yellowish thick exudate and peri-wound erythema and oedema. The dressing is partially removed, wet and grubby. Mr Villiers has not been attending for twice weekly wound care as instructed. He does not seem concerned about wound worsening. You feel frustrated as you have repeatedly provided education on the importance of leaving the dressing dry and intact and attending the clinic for wound care as instructed.

What are the health care needs?

GP goals and strategies?

Nurse goals and strategies?

Putting together a care plan



Photo by [Maksym Mazur](#) on [Unsplash](#)



# Take Away Messages

Dementia is common

It is caused by the damage to communication pathways between brain neurons

Dementia diagnosis and management is shifting from secondary to primary care

Primary care nurses can

- Promote brain health and discuss dementia risk reduction
- Recognise cognitive change and act early to trigger assessment and appropriate care

# Questions?

## Next time

- Have a conversation about cognition with patients and your medical team
- Apply a person-centred, team-based approach to identify potential health care needs
- Develop strategies to support individuals living with a cognitive change and/or chronic disease
- Self-care – looking after patients with dementia

## Thank you for listening

# Resources

Nurse resource for considering support strategies for Person Living with Dementia - [Dementia Pathways Tool - nurse and care planning](#)

General dementia resources - [Forward with Dementia](#)

[Dementia Australia - Help Sheets](#), Education programs, Support groups, Counselling

[The Dementia Guide - patient resource](#) (good patient resource, can order hard copy)

MCI - [About mild cognitive impairment \(Dementia Australia resource\)](#)

Risk reduction - [Cogdrisk assessment tool, Cogdrisk risk reduction factsheets for general practitioners. Dementia Australia risk reduction resources, Healthy Brain Healthy Life booklet](#)

Carer education and support - [Carer Gateway](#), Counselling, help with respite, [Taking care of carers fact sheet](#)

Changed behaviour support - [Dementia Support Australia](#)

# Resources

## CaLD Dementia Resources for Families and Professionals

<https://www.dementia.org.au/resources/diversity/cald-dementia-resources-for-families-and-professionals>

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Dementia Resources

<https://www.dementia.org.au/resources/for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-communities>

<https://healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/learn/health-topics/dementia/>

<https://dta.com.au/resources/lets-chat-dementia-webinar-series/>

Belfrage M, Hughson J, Douglas H & LoGiudice D, Best-practice guide to cognitive impairment and dementia care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending primary care, Version 1.1, Melbourne, Dementia Training Australia, 2020

**Advance Care Planning Australia** – Information on substitute decision-makers and advance care planning

**The Australian Dementia Network (ADNeT)** ADNeT has set up a Volunteer Register for persons who would like to participate in research into the causes, prevention, and treatment of dementia.

# Check This Out!

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GP Dementia Resource Hub  
Easy Access to Dementia Courses,  
Resources and Links

Visit <https://dta.com.au/general-practitioners/>



Dementia in Practice Podcast  
Selection of Episodes

- Driving and dementia – Who's in the driver's seat?
- Sleep Matters
- Dementia at the end of life – A person-centred approach
- A carer's story: When dementia comes home



Visit Site

<https://dta.com.au/ndetsf>

**Learn** about the skills and knowledge you need to support a person living with dementia, their carer and family.

**Hear** what people living with dementia expect from your care.

**Find** resource information across key dementia topic areas.

**Undertake** the DTAp self assessment tool to identify your training needs.

**Create** your Learning Pathway of dementia specialist training.

# Dementia training for Australia's workforce

To find out more visit

[dta.com.au](http://dta.com.au)

Dementia Training Australia is supported by funding from the Australian Government under the Dementia Training Program.



Dementia  
Training  
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**Tasmanian HealthPathways** is a web-based information portal developed by Primary Health Tasmania. It is designed to help primary care clinicians plan local patient care through primary, community and secondary healthcare systems.



**[tasmania.communityhealthpathways.org](http://tasmania.communityhealthpathways.org)**



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## Registering for the first time

Registering for and accessing HealthPathways for the first time - Individual HealthPathways accounts.



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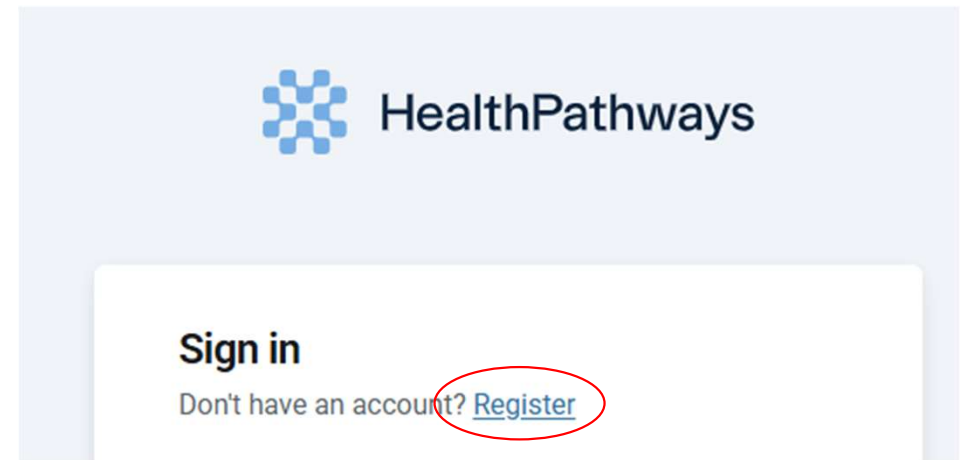
Have a question? Contact the Tasmanian HealthPathways team [HealthPathways@primaryhealthtas.com.au](mailto:HealthPathways@primaryhealthtas.com.au)



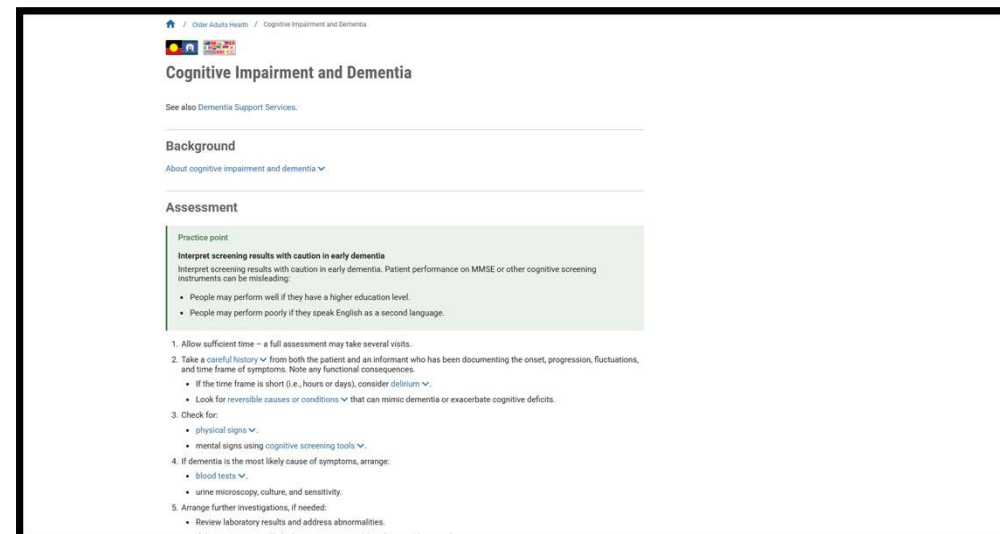
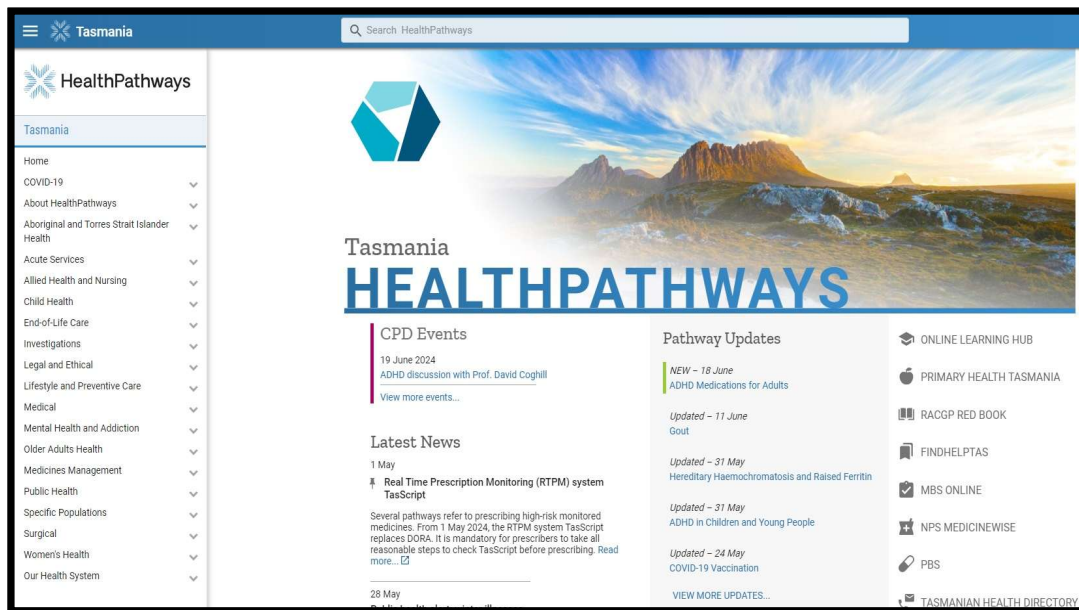
# Sign up for a personalised account today!



Scan to register  
now



**The generic login will cease on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> July**



**tasmania.communityhealthpathways.org**

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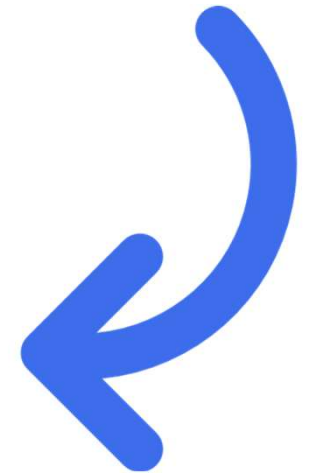
## Dementia Matters: a practical approach to assessment and nursing care – Session 2

Topic:	Dementia Matters
Facilitated by:	Primary Health Tasmania
Speaker:	Dimity Pond - Dementia Training Australia GP educator Caroline Gibson - Dementia Training Australia nurse educator
Date and time:	Thursday 26 June - 6:30pm to 8:00pm
Location:	Online via Zoom
Audience:	Primary care nurses working in Tasmania

REGISTER



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**Upcoming face to face events:**

***Multicultural health – culturally responsive  
practice and working with interpreters***

**Thursday 12 June – Hobart**

**Monday 23 June – Launceston**

**Tuesday 24 June – Devonport**



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**Thank you**

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