

Unraveling the Mysteries of Dementia: Research Efforts Around the World **By: Diana Primavesi, Public Education Coordinator**

As a Public Educator with the Alzheimer Society, these are questions I hear regularly when doing presentations in the community. Although we've come a long way since Alzheimer's disease was first identified by Alois Alzheimer in 1906, there are still so many unanswered questions about the disease and other types of dementia.

The bad news is that we have not yet found a cure. The good news is that there are people all around the world who are working hard to get us there as quickly as possible. Last month, Alzheimer Disease International held its annual conference in Perth, Australia. Every year, this annual gathering attracts dementia researchers from all over the world to report on their progress and share ideas.

No, I didn't get to fly to Australia for the event. But a quick visit to the conference website gave me a window on the event. The agenda included a wide range of topics, including understanding the disease process, developing treatments, and improving care. A number of emerging research areas were also highlighted, including biomarkers (early indicators of disease), dementia-friendly communities, and using technology to support people living with dementia. If you are curious about research, I encourage you to check out the book of conference abstracts. Just be sure to set aside some time. The document contains a summary of over 350 different research endeavours! You can find it at:

<http://www.alzint.org/docs/default-source/Abstract-Ts-and-Cs/adi-2015-conference-abstract-book.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

As a regional Alzheimer Society, we are not directly involved in research. Our focus is on education, client support, and raising awareness in the communities that we serve. However, we recognize the importance of research and support it through our national organization. The Alzheimer Society of Canada (ASC) provides funding for research focused on both understanding the disease through biomedical investigations and exploring the factors that affect quality of life for people with dementia and their care partners. Since 1989, ASC's research program has funded over \$43 million dollars in grants and awards. You can find out more about the research supported by ASC at:

<http://www.alzheimer.ca/en/pklnh/Research/Alzheimer-Society-Research-Program>

Recruiting study participants is often a challenge for researchers and we often help them spread the word about opportunities to participate. Many of our clients do decide to participate in research, but it is a very personal decision. Depending on the type of research, there may be significant time commitments, medical procedures, or travel involved. Some studies, however, can be as simple as participating in a phone interview. If you or a family member are considering participating in a research study, it is important to ask questions and learn about the study so you can make an informed decision. Our website has resources that can help, including a checklist of things to consider. You can find it at

<http://www.alzheimer.ca/en/pklnh/Research/participating-in-research>