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Alzheimer's Research UK report reveals increase in number of dementia researchers since 2008

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New analysis from Alzheimer's Research UK, the UK's leading dementia research charity, has revealed that the number of scientists working on the condition has almost doubled over six years. The charity's report, published today (14 March) at their annual research conference in Aberdeen, highlights major improvements in the UK dementia research landscape as funding for research into the condition has increased. But while the gap between dementia and other disease areas has narrowed over time, with progress being made in scientists' understanding of the condition, the analysis shows dementia research has still not caught up when compared to the huge impact of the condition. Figures from the report show that for every one dementia scientist, there are now four cancer researchers – compared to six in 2008/9.

The report, *Keeping pace: progress in dementia research capacity*, also comes as the charity launches its new Dementia Statistics Hub – an online 'one-stop shop' for the latest facts and statistics on dementia and research into the condition.

In 2012, Alzheimer's Research UK published its influential *Defeating Dementia* report, which found that despite massive costs to the UK economy, there were relatively few scientists working to tackle dementia compared to other conditions such as cancer. Since then, there has been a drive to step up the fight against dementia on both a national and global scale, with an increase in research funding from Government and charities such as Alzheimer's Research UK. Five years on, the charity set out to investigate the impact of this funding by repeating the original analysis.

Its new report, which compares the dementia research landscape in 2015/16 to the 2008/9 picture, shows that:

- The number of UK dementia researchers has almost doubled, from 1,614 to 3,169.
- UK dementia research productivity has nearly doubled, from 3,209

scientific publications a year to 6,141.

- For every dementia researcher, four work on cancer – compared to six cancer researchers in 2008/9.
- In 2014/15, 61% of UK dementia publications were internationally collaborative, compared to just 51% in 2008/9.

While the number of dementia researchers has increased, the total number of scientists working in other disease areas has also risen. As a result, the gap in research capacity between dementia and cancer, while narrower, still exists six years after the original study. The analysis shows that there is still only one dementia researcher for every £2m of costs to the UK economy attributed to the condition, compared to 10 for cancer.

Hilary Evans, Chief Executive of Alzheimer's Research UK, said:

“ Five years ago we challenged the UK Government to commit to long-term support for dementia research, and today we see the impact that greater investment can have. It's heartening to see funding increases have resulted in more scientists focusing on this devastating condition, and more discoveries being made in the search for new treatments. Today we understand more than ever before about the diseases that cause dementia, now the challenge is to translate that knowledge into breakthroughs that will transform people's lives. Dementia research has also benefited hugely from increasing international collaboration, and it will be crucial to ensure this trend continues as we negotiate our exit from the European Union.

We still need parity for dementia research: having started from a low base, we are still playing catch-up with other disease areas and we must increase the pace. Already 850,000 people are living with dementia in the UK, and that number will rise to over 1million by 2025 unless new treatments and preventions can be found. At Alzheimer's Research UK we have stepped up our own research and have bold plans to go even further, but we still need the continued focus of Government and other funders if we are to tackle what is fast becoming the greatest medical challenge of our generation.

Source:

<http://www.alzheimersresearchuk.org/new-figures-reveal-doubling-of-uk-dementia-researchers-since-2008/>
