

University of Manchester news release



European research to tackle the triple challenge of dementia, hearing and vision impairment

The combined impact of dementia, age-related hearing and vision impairment is to be investigated by a new multi-million European research consortium led by the University of Manchester.

Seven in ten Europeans over the age of 65 suffer from either sight or hearing problems and over two thirds suffer from depression or dementia. When combined together the cumulative impact of these dual or triple impairments is far greater than the individual conditions. The scale of combined sensory and cognitive problems is substantial but poorly understood.

The five year SENSE-Cog project, led by the University of Manchester, has been funded with €6.5m from the European Commission's Horizon 2020 research programme. The project aims to investigate this combined impact and develop new tools that could improve quality of life and optimise health and social care budgets across Europe.

Dr Iracema Leroi, an academic psychiatrist from The University of Manchester, who is the lead researcher on the project, said: "In combination these problems have a much greater effect than each one individually. Imagine if you have dementia which affects your memory or interferes with your recognition of familiar people. When you add visual impairment to that, you can understand why those affected may experience even greater cognitive difficulty or even experience altered behaviour such as agitation or hallucinations.

The burden on carers – often family members – is also increased as they are required to do much more on a daily basis and we see a greater number of these suffering from burn-out.”

The project seeks to define the scale of the challenges so that authorities across the continent can allocate resources more optimally. At the same time, researchers will also develop online tests, guides and multi-lingual training manuals to help medical professionals diagnose and treat the combined problems more effectively.

Minority groups are particularly disadvantaged with respect to diagnosis and treatment of mental and sensory problems, so researchers will be seeking out people from these groups to participate in the research.

The programme will also trial an intervention of at-home support for people with dual- and triple-impairments. This will be supported by specialist sensory therapists based at Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and will focus around pragmatic solutions to support both the affected person and their carer.

Dr Piers Dawes, a University of Manchester audiologist and co-lead of the SENSE-Cog project said: “Millions of people in the UK and wider EU are affected by this combination of problems and it’s only going to get more prevalent as the population ages. That’s why we have to understand the scale of the problem and then equip the public, carers and health care workers with the tools they need to deal with it. If we could reduce disability due to hearing and vision impairment, there is huge potential to improve mental well-being and even delay the deterioration of dementia.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

Interviews on request

Follow [@UomNews](#) on Twitter

The latest media videos are on our [YouTube page](#)

The latest news and coverage on [Google+](#)

A record of the University in the news is on our [Scoop.it](#) page

The consortium for SENSE-Cog:

- (1) THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER (UK, Coordinator)
- (2) European University Cyprus (Cyprus)
- (3) THE MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY (UK)
- (4) ETHNIKO KAI KAPODISTRIAKO PANEPISTIMIO ATHINON (Greece)
- (5) UNIVERSITE DE NICE SOPHIA ANTIPOLIS (France)
- (6) UNIVERSITE DE BORDEAUX (France)
- (7) Erasmus University Medical Center Rotterdam (Netherlands)
- (8) UNIVERSITETET I TROMSOE (Norway)
- (9) Katholische Hochschule Freiburg gGmbH (Germany)
- (10) Dementia Pal Ltd (UK industrial partner)
- (11) IXICO TECHNOLOGIES LIMITED (UK industrial partner)
- (12) Starkey Laboratories (US industrial partner)
- (13) HORTECH GGMBH (Germany)
- (14) ESSILOR INTERNATIONAL SA (Industrial partner)
- (15) GABO:MI GESELLSCHAFT FUR ABLAUFORGANISATION:MILLIARIUM MBH & CO KG (German project management partner, SME)
- (16) Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Nice (France)
- (17) UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS (Cyprus)

Media enquiries to:

Jamie Brown
Media Relations Officer
The University of Manchester
Tel: 0161 2758383
Mob: 07887 561318
Email: jamie.brown@manchester.ac.uk