

Plain Language Summary - Barriers and Solutions for Putting Research into Practice

A summary report from a Research Knowledge Exchange Seminar co-hosted by The Alzheimer Society of Ireland and Dementia Research Network Ireland. To read the full report visit <https://shorturl.at/FGKLW>.

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Background

More than 64,000 people in Ireland are living with dementia and approximately 180,000 people are family carers. This number is growing and expected to more than double by 2045. Dementia research must provide real benefits to those currently affected by the disease and/or those who will develop it in the future.

There is international concern that health research findings are not translated into practice. In 2022, The ASI spoke with people living with dementia, family carers, clinicians and researchers and research translation was highlighted as a key challenge for the research community. Similarly, many people with dementia and their families felt frustrated with research outputs 'sitting on a shelf'.

What we did

To explore this challenge further and identify solutions, The ASI, with the support of Dementia Research Network Ireland (DRNI) and members of the Dementia Research Advisory Team hosted a seminar focused on research translation.

The ASI and DRNI organised an Event Advisory Panel comprised of:

- People living with dementia
- Family carers,
- Experienced researchers
- Early career researchers.

Panel members co-developed all aspects of the event including event logistics, the agenda for the day, discussion group topics, and dissemination plans.

The event agenda included:

- Guest speakers with direct experience and examples of translating research into practice

- Small, mixed discussion groups to brainstorm the barriers and solutions for translating research into practice (and provide networking opportunities)
- Informal networking breaks over refreshments



Guest speakers included The ASI's CEO Mr Andy Heffernan, as well as a number of leading clinicians, researchers and members of The ASI's Dementia Research Advisory Team.

What we found

We hosted several discussion groups focused on barriers and facilitators to implementing research into practice. We combined all the responses gathered and sorted them into broad themes; there were five in total.

Barriers	Solutions
<p><i>Culture of Scarcity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research funding is limited, with little scope for long-term projects/implementation of findings. ● Structural issues in Higher Education Institutes such as short-term contracts. ● Limited time to implement research findings. 	<p><i>Culture of Plenty</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase the availability of research funding (value and frequency). ● Provide additional time and funding specifically for the implementation of research findings.
<p><i>Access to Collaborators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of access to research collaborators impacts research translation. ● Poor or limited collaboration leads to research waste, duplication and lack of implementation of findings into practice. 	<p><i>Collaboration & Knowledge Sharing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Joined-up thinking enhances collaboration ● Role for DRNI /The ASI in facilitating collaboration and networking across Ireland.
<p><i>Limited Person/Public Involvement (PPI)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poor inclusion of the lived experience negatively impacts the quality of research and implementation/utilisation of research for groups. 	<p><i>Research Partnerships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilitating active and authentic PPI partnerships between all parties where all stakeholders' perspectives are valued.
<p><i>Accessibility of Research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poor communication of research to the wider public leads to the perception that research is 'left on a shelf' or held in an 'Ivory Tower'. ● Research findings are inaccessible to those outside of academic circles. ● Higher Education Institutions only value academic research outputs for researcher career progression. 	<p><i>Better Communication of Research</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Researchers must ensure that research is communicated to the wider public, in appropriate and creative ways (videos, leaflets, social media, etc.) ● Higher Education Institutions should include public research communication when considering researcher career progression (rather than only academic).
<p><i>Lack of Awareness of Dementia</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A lack of awareness of dementia as a progressive disease amongst the wider public which impacts prioritisation for funding. 	<p><i>Awareness raising of Dementia</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build greater public awareness and understanding of dementia so the importance of investing in dementia research is understood.

What's Next?

The ASI and DRNI are considering the next steps while implementing small changes in the interim. For example, research dissemination bursaries, supporting PPI, hosting future events, funding research, facilitating collaboration and investing in PPI.

Conclusions

This event brought the dementia research community and people affected by dementia together, to support the development of productive relationships and collaborations built on common ground and a shared passion; and to ensure that dementia research creates as much impact as possible for people affected by it.

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