Costs of dementia can be reduced

The cost estimates to care for a person living with dementia in residential aged care, released by Flinders University today, reaffirms Dementia Australia’s call for the urgent need for ongoing, systemic, aged care reform.

The annual cost of $88,000 to care for a person living with dementia in residential aged care can be reduced by improving the training or our workforce and applying dementia-friendly principles in the community, throughout the aged care sector and in hospitals.

Maree McCabe, CEO Dementia Australia said with 425,000 people living with dementia in Australia this research contributes compelling data to the national estimate that the cost of dementia care to our economy each year is more than $15 billion annually.

The Flinders University report found that 54 per cent of the costs involved were pharmacological and 38 per cent related to hospital care.

“This suggests that clinical interventions are more common in residential aged care rather than optioning for a more holistic approach,” Ms McCabe said.

“We know from our own research and internationally that person-centred care can reduce the use of antipsychotics and other drugs.

“Greater investment in training and education across the acute and aged care sectors in the management of behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia will result in improved quality of life for people living with dementia and decrease the length of stay in hospitals.

“Building awareness of dementia-friendly principles will also support people in their communities to remain meaningfully engaged and potentially stay in their homes for longer.

“This research reinforces the need for more strategic investment in dementia services to avoid an escalation in costs that will be unsustainable.”

The research released today by Flinders University reported the annual cost estimate was based on a study of 541 individuals across 17 aged care homes. For the full results of the study ‘Direct health and residential care costs of people living with dementia in Australian residential aged care’, visit https://doi.org/10.1002/gps.4842.

The Dementia Australia research and data can be found at www.dementia.org.au/statistics

Dementia Australia is the national peak body for people, of all ages, living with all forms of dementia, their families and carers. It provides advocacy, support services, education and information. An estimated 425,000 people have dementia in Australia. This number is projected to reach more than 1.1 million by 2056. Dementia Australia is the new voice of Alzheimer’s Australia.

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When talking or writing about dementia please refer to Dementia-Friendly Language Guidelines.