

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Kasey McCulloch, Media Officer, Mercy Health

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Younger Onset Dementia research scholarship awarded to Edith Cowan University

A \$50,000 research scholarship to improve the care and lives of people diagnosed with Younger Onset Dementia has been awarded by Mercy Health and the Lovell Foundation to Edith Cowan University.

The Trevor Mast Scholarship is named after a well-known winemaker, husband, father and grandfather who was diagnosed with Younger Onset Dementia at 57 years old. The scholarship will be used to develop an education package for employed carers of people living with Younger Onset Dementia.

Younger Onset Dementia is defined as a dementia diagnosis before the age of 65. Today it is estimated up to 25,100 Australians are affected by the disease.

An Australian literature review by Sansoni et al. (2014) found a need for existing services to provide more age-appropriate programs and services for those suffering from Younger Onset Dementia.

Edith Cowan researchers, with expertise in the areas of gerontology and dementia, will evaluate Mercy Health's current staff training practices and develop a new education package to roll out to six pilot sites. Younger Onset Dementia Champions will be identified to assist with staff training and to help identify any gaps in the program before it is rolled out to all of Mercy Health's 22 residential aged care homes.

Mercy Health Group CEO Stephen Cornelissen said the Catholic organisation is excited to be taking a lead role in developing the skills of the aged care workforce.

"The key goal of this scholarship is for aged care workers to be able to provide a meaningful lifestyle for people living with Younger Onset Dementia," explained Adjunct Professor Cornelissen.

"We know symptoms associated with younger people with dementia present unique challenges, as they are more likely to be at a stage of life where they are more physically and socially active."

The Trevor Mast Scholarship is funded by the Lovell Foundation, which has been fundraising for a Younger Onset Dementia-specific home for the past six years.

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