Health in focus during Dementia Awareness Week (21-28 September)

Local doctors have highlighted the link between general health and dementia prevention during Dementia Awareness Week this week (21-28 September).

Associate Professor Friedbert Kohler, Clinical Director Aged Care and Rehabilitation for South Western Sydney Local Health District said even though there was no prevention or cure for dementia, evidence showed that there were things people could do to reduce their risk of developing the illness.

“There is a body of evidence which suggests that maintaining an active lifestyle, an active mind and eating healthily can help reduce a person’s risk of developing dementia,” Professor Kohler said.

“Things you can do include challenging your brain with new activities, such as crosswords, puzzles, learning a new language or enrolling in a course.

“Be physically active – walk, play sport, go to the gym, dance, do yoga, tai chi or gardening.

“Eat a variety of healthy foods including fruit and vegetables, wholegrains, lean meats, reduced-fat dairy products and unsaturated oils. Evidence suggests that omega-3 fatty acids found in fish such as salmon, tuna, trout, mackerel, and sardines may also help.

“Make sure your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and weight are healthy.

“Stay social - catch up with family and friends, join a club or group, volunteer, or go to events.

“Don’t smoke and drink only in moderation. Smoking and heavy drinking are two of the most preventable risk factors for Alzheimer’s disease,” Prof Kohler said.

For information and advice about dementia risk reduction visit: www.mindyourmind.org.au

Call the National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500 or visit www.fightdementia.org.au

Dementia facts:

- Dementia describes the symptoms of a large group of illnesses which cause a progressive decline in a person’s functioning.

- It is a broad term used to describe a loss of memory, intellect, rationality, social skills and physical functioning.

- Alzheimer’s disease is the most common form of dementia, accounting for up to 70 percent of all dementia cases.

- Dementia can happen to anybody, but it is more common after the age of 65. However, people in their 30s, 40s and 50s can also have dementia.

- Almost 280,000 Australians currently live with dementia.

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• Each week, there are 1,600 new cases of dementia in Australia. That is expected to grow to 7,400 new diagnoses each week by 2050.
• Dementia is the third leading cause of death in Australia, after heart disease and stroke.
• One in four people over the age of 85 have dementia.
• Dementia is already the single greatest cause of disability in older Australians (aged 65 years or older).

Local services and activities:

Campbelltown – Free *Forget-me-not Café* morning tea for people with dementia, their family and carers. A morning tea is held at the Arts Centre Café, Campbelltown Art Gallery at 10.30am on the fourth Tuesday of each month (next morning tea – 25th September).

Bargo – Free *Forget-me-not Café* morning tea at the Tahmoor Garden Centre on the third Friday of each month (next meeting 21 September).

Bankstown – Hospital patients from across the District can be referred by their specialist to the Professorial Clinic at Bankstown Hospital for a dementia assessment (criteria apply).