



You can help us
PREVENT FUTURE SUFFERING FOR OTHERS

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Does our hearing hold the key to a cure for Alzheimer's and dementia?

Over 400,000 Australians have dementia. Around 50% of people over the age of 60 have hearing loss. What's more, there has long been a link between dementia and hearing loss. And it's a link that Dr Peter Friedland at Charlies' Department of Otolaryngology and his research colleagues believe may hold the key to preventative treatment and maybe even a cure for dementia and Alzheimer's disease. What he needs now is the funding to prove it. Precious time at home, rather than in hospital.

Why are hearing loss and cognitive loss (dementia) linked?

"Nobody really understands why hearing loss is linked to cognitive loss, but there is a link," explains Dr Friedland.

In fact, according to a landmark paper on dementia in the Lancet in 2017, hearing loss was identified as one of the top determinants of future cognitive loss.

"People who have cognitive

fallout (memory loss), or early dementia, also have hearing loss," says Dr Friedland. "The question is: does one cause the other? If so, which is the cause? And how can we use this knowledge to treat and prevent both hearing and cognitive deterioration."

Unscrambling this chicken and egg situation

This conundrum is the crux of Dr Friedland's research, undertaken

with a number of institutions, including UWA, Edith Cowan University, Curtin University, the Australian Alzheimer's Research Foundation and the Medical Research Fund.

"It's a chicken and egg situation," explains Dr Friedland. "Is it that, as the brain ages, our cognition and then our hearing deteriorates? Or is it the case that when you get less stimulation of the central auditory



Alzheimer's disease accounts for 90% of dementia cases.



Dr Peter Friedland, Charlies' Department of Otolaryngology

pathways – from hearing, listening and understanding – our cognition deteriorates?”

The research: Focusing on ‘memory complainers’

“When we’re thinking about dementia, there are four types of patients,” says Dr Friedland.

“There are people who have dementia at one end of the spectrum, and people who don’t – who are ‘normal’ – at the other end,” he says. “In between there are people who have mild cognitive decline or early signs of dementia that show up on PET and MRI scans, and there are also people we call ‘Memory Complainers’.”

Memory Complainers don’t have any identifiable signs of dementia – they are effectively ‘normal’ – but they’re worried they might be losing their cognitive abilities. These people are the focus for Dr Friedland’s research, which is split into two key avenues of investigation.

“Firstly, we want to know what happens when we rehabilitate hearing loss in people who don’t have dementia, but who may have early cognitive fallout,” says Dr Friedland.

“Previous studies show that if you give hearing aids and cochlea implants to people who already have dementia, it doesn’t make any difference. But can you improve cognition and delay the onset of dementia if you give aids or implants to people with

severe hearing loss who don’t have dementia?

“Our longitudinal study, which involves patients taking cognitive tests before they receive their hearing aids or cochlea implants and then 12 months later, shows a statistically significant improvement in patients’ cognitive abilities.”

The second part of Dr Friedland’s research focuses on identifying an early marker or indicator for dementia, which could hold the key to preventative treatments.



“The Memory Complainers in our study have concerns about cognitive decline, but it’s subjective,” says Dr Friedland. “They say things like, ‘I’m worried I’m losing my memory’, but their PET and MRI scans are normal, their cognitive test are normal, and often their standard hearing tests are normal.

“However, we’ve picked up a statistical abnormality when we do a very specific auditory processing test called a CAP test, indicating that this test may work as an early marker for dementia. This would open the door to a number of preventative therapies – some of which we’re already developing with cognitive psychologists – that may slow or even prevent the progression of cognitive loss and dementia. We just need to follow up with patients and prove it.”

The big challenge now? Funding

Billions of dollars have been poured into Alzheimer’s treatments, particularly anti-amyloid drugs, but the results and investment returns have been disappointing and many pharmacological firms are now moving away from dementia research. This waning momentum, combined with the fact that Dr Friedland’s research is non-pharmacological in nature, means that securing funds to complete the research has been hard.

“We’re talking about non-pharmacological

“This would open the door to a number of preventative therapies that may slow or even prevent the progression of cognitive loss and dementia. We just need to follow up with patients and prove it.”

treatments and tests,” says Dr Friedland. “Because it isn’t a drug, it isn’t seen as sexy or easy to commercialise, so raising the funds we need to

conduct follow-ups and collect all the data has been difficult.

“If we miss the follow-ups, then we miss the milestones. We need to check in with patients every year or six months. Only then can we prove the validity of these tests and get on with developing potentially life-saving therapies.”

To support Dr Friedland’s work and other life-changing, life-saving research projects at Charlies, please make a secure online donation at charliesfoundation.org.au

Hike the Great Wall of China for Charlies.

Raise funds. Build friendships. Break down medical barriers.

Embark on the adventure of a lifetime and join Charlies Foundation for Research on the Hike for Health: Great Wall of China in 2019, raising vital funds for research at Charlies – research that transforms patient care, outcomes and lives.

A once-in-a-lifetime adventure for the greater good

From the hustle and bustle of Beijing to the majesty and mysticism of the Great Wall, you’ll trek with expert guides for five fascinating days on the path less travelled, immersing yourself in China’s ancient culture.

- Visit bustling Beijing, the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven.
- Experience the poignancy of Tiananmen Square.
- Explore mountain valleys, local villages and rolling farmlands.

- *When: 16-24 May 2019*
- *Travel cost: \$2,700*
- *Duration: 9 days (5-day trek)*
- *Grade: 3/5 (moderate)*
- *Accommodation: Twin-share in 3-star hotels and guesthouses*

- Travel back in time along the Great Wall, deciphering the stories and poems etched into the wall’s watchtowers, every brick seeming to tell a tale of war and adventure.

Make friends, memories and a life-changing, life-saving difference

Organised by Inspired Adventures, the hike brings together like-minded fundraising supporters from various Australian and New Zealand health and medical research organisations for an epic hiking experience. You’ll stand united as a team, atop the Great Wall, knowing the difference you’ve made.

To find out more and register for this unforgettable experience, visit inspiredadventures.com.au and search for ‘Charlies Foundation for Research’ – you can download an information pack and register online. Alternatively, call the Inspired Adventures team on 1300 905 188.

Support that creates an enduring legacy.



Leave a life-saving legacy

Making a bequest to fund vital research is easier than you might think. To find out more, contact me on 6457 6317.

It's been a hugely successful 12 months for the Charlies Foundation for Research, thanks to the generosity of our kind and loyal community of donors. Your support has, once again, ensured we've been able to fund ground-breaking research that improves outcomes for patients at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and Osborne Park Hospital every day.

One bequest making a huge difference

Over the last year, we've been able to provide over \$375,000 in research funding, with \$60,000 coming from one incredibly generous bequest.

This single bequest is enabling Dr Leon Adams and Professor Gary Jeffrey to undertake an important pilot study for a novel outpatient-based model of care for chronic liver disease patients. Watch this space for updates and developments...

Farewell to Betty and Maureen

On a sadder note, we'll soon be saying goodbye to the longest-serving members of our team, Betty and Maureen. With over 50 years of service between them, their contribution to the Foundation and our mission cannot be overstated. They will be sorely missed by donors, researchers and everyone at the Foundation.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Betty and Maureen for all their hard work, and to wish them all the best for the future. And, as always, I'd like to thank you for your generous support – your donations fund research that transforms and saves patients' lives.

Vicki Rasmussen

Vicki Rasmussen, Executive Director, Charlies Foundation for Research



Congratulations Charlies Champions!

We had an amazing time at City to Surf and we're so proud of our team, Charlies Champions, who have united together to raise funds for life-changing medical research. The team were up bright and early on the day and eagerly waited for the starting pistol with participants in almost all distances, including the 4km, 12km and even the half marathon.

A huge thank you to the remarkable people who have raised over \$2,300! We wouldn't be able to continue funding vital research without the passion and enthusiasm of people like you.

Are you sad that you missed out on joining the team this year? Why not check out our Facebook page to stay up to date with the latest happenings? Simply search for Charlies Foundation for Research for the most up-to-date news.



Helen Carvosso, Chair of the Board

Meet the Charlies Foundation for Research Board.

Much has changed at Charlies Foundation for Research in the last eight years, due, in no small part, to the leadership of Helen Carvosso. As Chair of the Board, Helen has been instrumental in turning the foundation into an invaluable source of funding for researchers at Charlies.

Helen joined the board of Charlies Foundation for Research at a time when the foundation as we know it today was in its infancy.

“I first got involved in 2010,” said Helen. “The board was looking for someone with communications and governance expertise to help take the foundation in a new direction – away from being a committee within the hospital, and becoming an independent entity with more freedom to fulfil its fundraising mission and potential.”

In her day job as Director of Marketing at leading accounting and business consulting firm RSM Australia, Helen is responsible for a nationwide marketing strategy and a team spanning 30 offices across the country.

This strategic management and marketing know-how, combined with her experience as president of the YWCA in Perth, has been crucial in the evolution of the foundation, particularly since she became Chair of the Board in 2014.

“A lot has changed,” explained Helen. “We’ve restructured the board, brought in some great people, including Vicki who, as Executive Director, brings a wealth of fundraising experience to the team.

“It’s enabled us to really make some headway in raising awareness and funds to support vital patient-centred research at Charlies.”

Thankfully, Helen has never been a patient at Charlies, but like a lot of people in Perth she feels a strong connection to the hospital.

“So many people have experienced the care at

Charlies and people speak so fondly of the hospital,” said Helen. “It’s really quite humbling to hear what a great experience people have had, and to know that the foundation plays a key role in developing and providing that care and those experiences.

“On the board, we regularly see and hear how Charlies’ research improves outcomes for patients and transforms people’s lives.”

It’s this impact – the way funding translates into research that translates into life-changing outcomes for patients – that fills Helen with hope about the future of the foundation and research at Charlies.

“These are exciting times for the foundation. We’ve got some great people involved, both on the board and on the staff, and we’re working with some wonderfully talented researchers.

“Looking forward, we’re going to focus even more on targeted fundraising, particularly looking for and promoting research projects that don’t necessarily get the publicity or funding they deserve.

“In part, that’s about connecting with researchers at Charlies, so they know the foundation is here to help them find funding. But it’s also about sharing our stories with the broader community, letting people know about the great work we’re doing and explaining how, by supporting the foundation, we can all be part of this world-class research and all benefit from it.”

If you would like to support life-changing, life-saving research at Charlies, please visit charliesfoundation.org.au where you can make a secure online donation.

Improving Heart Health Together

Following a heart attack, patients are encouraged to join the cardiac rehabilitation program at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, designed to improve their overall health. Hazel Mountford, a Senior Physiotherapist Cardiology, runs the sessions where a group of patients gather for supervised exercises and friendly conversation.

Patients sometimes chose to exercise in a home-based program and these people often leave the hospital and their quality of long term health is unknown. Hazel was increasingly curious about the effectiveness of both programs and so she decided to develop a research project in 2017.

Over 8 weeks, patients either participated in a home-based program or hospital-based physiotherapy sessions and Hazel discovered that patients overwhelmingly benefited from the supervised group sessions.

Hazel believes the crucial difference is not only the regular exercise, but the support, conversations

and motivation from other patients and members of staff. Anne Marie has been an active member of the group following a heart attack late last year. A vibrant and independent woman, Anne Marie enjoys the support she receives at the sessions and is now managing her health and improving her quality of life, strength and fitness.

Hazel's dedication to her patients means that her next big project involves researching how to improve the outcomes for patients who are unable to attend the hospital due to distance, time or other commitments.

Thanks to Hazel's research, Physiotherapists can now recommend with certainty that the hospital-based program is the best option for patients to stay healthy and active for longer.



Hazel Mountford (left) with a patient in the rehabilitation gym

A big thank you to the hospital's wonderful volunteers.

E Block Outpatient Department recently held a thank you lunch for the volunteer workers here at Sir Charles Gairdner. The Women's Auxiliary, Gairdner Voluntary Group and the Volunteer Transport Group contributed to the upgrading of our facility which saw the department recover chairs that were in disrepair, provide a new ambulance bay and improve our imprest areas.

The hard work of the volunteers here at Sir Charles Gairdner gives our patients a much better experience and improves the morale of our staff. We would like to thank them all for being a great support of our service.

