

Dementia will 'overwhelm healthcare'

Chris Smyth, Health Editor
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The World Health Organisation warns that the number of people with the condition will rise to 152 million by 2050
ANTHONY DEVLIN/PRESS ASSOCIATION

Dementia cases will triple around the world within a generation, the World Health Organisation has warned. Caring for people with dementia will cost \$2 trillion in little more than a decade, double today's figure, threatening to "overwhelm health and social services", the WHO says. The international health agency is urging governments to wake up to the threat posed by the incurable condition as the global population ages.

The WHO estimates that today's 50 million dementia sufferers will reach 152 million by 2050 as it launches the first global monitoring system for dementia. "Nearly 10 million people develop dementia each year," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO's director-general, said. "This is an alarm call: we must pay greater attention to this growing challenge and ensure that all people living with dementia get the care that they need."

He wants countries to tell citizens how to cut their risk of dementia through healthier living, train health staff in

dealing with the condition and implement plans to care for rising numbers of patients. Experts believe that prevention is crucial as there are no treatments to slow the brain damage that underlies dementia. Dominic Carter, senior policy officer at the Alzheimer's Society, said: "With an ageing population and no way to cure, prevent or slow down the condition, dementia is set to be the 21st century's biggest killer."

Jackie Doyle-Price, the care minister, confirmed yesterday that the government would scrap a planned £72,000 cap on care costs, as it struggles to reform a crumbling elderly care system.

- Growth in life expectancy has stalled across many areas of the UK. Figures from the Office for National Statistics show the overall rate of improvement in life expectancy at birth during the first half of this decade was 75.3 per cent lower for males and 82.7 per cent lower for females when compared with the first half of the previous decade.

2 comments

[Shelley Jenkin](#)

The stalling of the growth in life expectancy is not a bad thing, it cannot continue endlessly; rather the focus should be on HEALTHY life expectancy. Merely existing in a sorry state for years is nothing to aspire to!

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My mother died at 87 - the only cause of death, dementia. A woman who looked after herself as well as it was possible - healthy diet, healthy weight, daily exercise and plenty of walking,

never smoked and hardly drank. Took a degree at 70 years old, so kept her brain active. Whilst it might be possible to postpone the onset of dementia by leading a healthy life, surely a person at risk of the condition will eventually succumb?