A3 - The perceived versus assessed risk of Alzheimer's disease in young, mid-age, and older adults: a method to explore and enhance awareness

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BACKGROUND:
Risk awareness programs for Alzheimer’s disease (AD) are typically targeted at older adults (aged over 55) but there may be a need to target younger adults. The more aware we are of the risk factors for AD the greater hope we have of modifying risk and preventing the disease in later life. The current project explores whether the perceived risk of AD is related to the assessed risk of AD in young (aged 18 to 39 years), mid-age (aged 40 to 59 years) and older adults (over 60 years).

METHODS:
For all participants the perceived risk of AD, measured using a perceived risk scale, will be compared against the assessed risk of AD measured by the Australian National University-Alzheimer’s Disease Risk Index (ANU-ADRI). These assessments will together form the Perceived Assessed Risk of Alzheimer’s Disease across Lifespan (PARAD-L) tool. Qualitative semi-structured interviews will also be conducted with participants from each age group to explore the preferred strategies for increasing risk awareness and modifying risk (where applicable).

RESULTS:
It is hypothesised that there will be a greater discrepancy between perceived assessed risk of AD for younger compared to older adults; younger participants may perceive themselves to be at low risk but may actually be assessed as ‘high risk’. The qualitative interviews may highlight the fact that preferred strategies for increasing awareness and modifying risk are also age-dependent.

These discrepancy-based results will help us identify gaps in knowledge or understanding of AD risk factors which will inform the development of future preventative strategies and interventions. The knowledge gained from this project will be transferred to consumer organisations, researchers, primary health care professionals and policy makers in the form of age-specific guidelines/recommendations for increasing AD risk awareness.