A10 - A protocol for investigating environmental and lifestyle risk factors for younger onset dementia

M Catons,1 A Withall,1 B Draper2
1DCRC Assessment and Better Care, UNSW Australia, 2School of Psychiatry, UNSW Australia

Approximately 1 in 750 people in Australia experience the onset of dementia symptoms before the age of 65 (Withall, 2013). Younger onset dementia (YOD) has significant consequences both at a personal and community level, but little is known about the epidemiology of the disease. There is some misconception that YOD can be explained by genetic influences alone, but directly heritable dementias only account for up to 20% of cases. Additionally, a number of environmental and lifestyle risk factors have been identified as important in the development of dementia in old age (Barnes & Yaffe 2011). It is not unlikely, therefore, that modifiable risk factors may also be important in the context of YOD.

This poster will outline the protocol for a pilot case-control study investigating six potentially modifiable risk factors for YOD: traumatic brain injury, alcohol and/or other drug misuse, cognitive inactivity, psychiatric illness, cardiovascular risk factors and exposure to occupational hazards. The aim is to increase understanding of the risk factor profile of people with YOD, ultimately leading to the development of public health initiatives aimed at reducing YOD risk.