

Professor Esme Moniz-Cook, pictured, is Honorary Professor of Clinical Psychology and Ageing at the University of Hull and chair of the InterDem board, which co-ordinates research into dementia care. Her work received a major financial boost this summer from the National Institute of Health Research



Major new awards for dementia care research

A MAJOR programme grant of nearly £2m has been awarded to HYMS and University of Hull researchers at the Humber Mental Health Teaching NHS Trust and the North Yorkshire R&D Alliance to continue their work into improving care for people with dementia.

Dr Esme Moniz-Cook, Honorary Professor of Clinical Psychology & Ageing, will lead the research team, which has been awarded a grant of £1,999,512 by the National Institute of Health Research. She will also contribute to the work of a second team in London, led by Professor Martin Orrell of University College London, which has received a grant of £1,988,000. A third grant of a similar amount has also been awarded.

New therapy

The applied research in the HYMS region, now funded until 2012, will develop a therapy to help families and staff at home or in care homes to reduce distressed behaviour in people who have dementia. This enhances well-being and quality of life, not only for the older person with dementia, but also for the carers.

The treatment – arising from Professor Moniz-Cook's research in care homes – relies heavily on specialist clinical psychologists who can help carers and healthcare professionals to decide who is the most suitable person to help the person with dementia. The treatment draws on a wide variety of primary and specialist care professionals, all of whom may be able to contribute

to effective care in different situations: GPs, old age physicians, old age psychiatrists, community nurses, district nurses, pharmacists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and social workers. At various times, these specialisms may all provide support for people with dementia who are distressed, confused or depressed.

However, few treatment centres have easy access to experts in this kind of functional analysis. To address this, the programme has drawn together all the current clinical psychology expertise in the UK, collaborating with international innovation from the US and Australia.

A number of innovative methods of support are being explored, including telephone intervention and an interactive computerised decision support system for care staff and health care professionals.

Extending the network

In 1999, with the support of the European Commission, the University of Hull set up an extensive network for applied research into dementia care. The network became known as InterDem ('interventions in dementia').

Eleven InterDem members are recipients of the three latest awards, including board chair Esme Moniz-Cook.

Until 2006, the HYMS Older People's Mental Health research programme consisted of a core group of northern universities (Bradford, Hull, Sheffield Hallam, York and York St John), North Yorkshire R&D Alliance, and voluntary sector organisations and NHS Trusts.

But the £2m Humber award will

now extend the group to add expertise from the University of Wales at Bangor, UCL, South Staffordshire Healthcare Foundation Trust and Newcastle General Hospital.

Local NHS collaborators include Dr Nigel Steel (an old age physician), Dr Linda Brown (an old age psychiatrist) and Janet Woodhouse (a community nurse). Angie Mason (a Service Director) will oversee the implementation.

More areas

Research led in London which also draws on HYMS expertise will investigate psychological and social interventions designed to reduce disability, improve outcomes, and enhance the quality of life for people with dementia and their carers.

These include testing mental stimulation therapies and reminiscence techniques, using an expert carer programme to train ex-carers to help new carers of people with dementia, and a new initiative to develop intensive home support to help manage crises at home and prevent admission to hospital for people with dementia.

Professor Esme Moniz-Cook said: "These are exciting times for practitioners who support older people and their carers.

"We hope our applied research programmes over the next five years will develop the evidence base for psychosocial interventions across the dementia trajectory, and explore how these can be used in routine NHS practice."