

The Disconnected Mind

Lorna Layward

I'm particularly interested in dementia because it has such a major impact on the quality of life of so many people, not just the people who it's affected but by families and carers. Very little research has been done on that until relatively recently and we are still a hugely underfunded area of research, and one of the things that's important in Research into Ageing is to make sure that we're funding research that's going to make a difference to older people.

We asked our supporters, older people, what they think we should be researching on, what were their priorities and it was resounding, it was astonishing. Most people said, concentrate on the conditions that affect the mind, on Alzheimer's disease, on dementia, on strokes, because it has such a big impact not only on the people who are affected, but also those around them and also on society as a whole.

The Disconnected Mind project is so important because we have three quarters of a million people in this country living with dementia and the effects of that, upon not only the people affected, but on their families and carers is huge and we have a unique opportunity here to make a real difference to those peoples lives.

Jan MacMillan

I'm Jan Macmillan and I took care of my dad who suffered with dementia.

I think for about the last three years of my dad's life he started to become quite confused. To begin with my dad looked after himself very well and he was very thrifty and he would cook so much food and put it in the fridge, he couldn't recognise what it was and that became a bit worrying was at the point I decided I would move in with my dad and look after him.

At the beginning dad would be up in the morning, cook his own breakfast which was porridge and grapefruit every morning in life and that was prepared the night before believe it or not, soaked the night before and the grapefruit was prepared the night before so it was quite routine. He'll go up and put the heat under the porridge but there was quite a few mornings where I would find the place pretty much full of gas and he'd say 'It wouldn't light for me dear you know' and as I say he didn't realise the dangers.

Very confused conversations sometimes you know. Another occasion when my children came to visit, again a very very pleasant man but he did say that it was like Sukerhole Street, it's a street in Glasgow, 'Its like Sukerhole Street in here'. I said it's my birthday dad the children have come to visit me and that was fine, then days later he said 'I can't believe I missed your birthday dear.'

Dads illness had an affect on all the family, all of us were very concerned and upset that dad was now a bit confused – so it is upsetting when that happens to a parent. I think the Disconnected Mind project is a great thing, doing this research and trying to understand the illness better, it can only be a good thing to try and get to the bottom of it, and help prevent it. None of us know where sometime in the future we may benefit and I think the results of this project, this research could help future generations, possibly preventing them from suffering from it.