



Highlights from the 34th Alzheimer Europe Conference

The 34th Alzheimer Europe Conference (#34AEC) "New horizons – Innovating for dementia" took place at the Centre International de Conférences Genève (CICG), between 8 and 10 October 2024, attracting 963 delegates from 42 European countries. On the agenda were over 400 presenters (150 presenters for oral presentations, another 100 quick oral presentations and 240 poster presentations), sharing their research, knowledge and experience in an atmosphere of true collaboration and solidarity.

ANCILLARY MEETINGS

Prior to the opening of the conference, a number of ancillary meetings took place at the conference centre in Geneva.

European Group of Governmental Experts on Dementia meets in Geneva, prior to #34AEC

The European Group of Governmental Experts on Dementia held an in-person meeting on 7 and 8 October in Geneva, Switzerland, in advance of #34AEC. 19 European countries were represented at the meeting, in addition to representatives from the World Health Organization (WHO), WHO Europe, from the European Commission's DG Research & Innovation (DG RTD), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and from Alzheimer Europe. Over the course of the two-day meeting, the group heard about national dementia strategies and policies, as well as European and international policy developments.



ABOVE: The European Group of Governmental Experts on Dementia meeting, Geneva.

At the national level, representatives from ministries from Belgium (Flanders), Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Malta, Poland, Sweden and United Kingdom (Scotland) provided updates to the group on recent developments in their respective countries. Alzheimer Europe led discussions on the use of anti-amyloid treatments and recent developments at a European level, as well as presenting on putting risk-reduction research into practice. The WHO provided an update on work at an international and European region level, including on the future of the Global Action Plan on Dementia. The European Commission presented on the place of dementia and brain health in the EU's research programmes, whilst the OECD presented on their work which has relevance for dementia.

The European Group of Governmental Experts on Dementia was formed in 2018 by Alzheimer Europe, the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, the Italian Ministry of Health and the Scottish Government and is facilitated by Alzheimer Europe.

European Alzheimer's Disease Consortium hosts autumn meeting



ABOVE: European Alzheimer's Disease Consortium meeting, Geneva.

The autumn meeting of the European Alzheimer's Disease Consortium (EADC) commenced with introductory remarks from Frank Jessen and Sebastiaan Engelborghs, Chair and co-Chair of the EADC. The EADC is a network of clinical centres of excellence in dementia research and treatment, comprising memory clinics and institutions from 20 countries across Europe.

Key presentations on day one included lectures from Federica Ribaldi (Hopitaux Universitaires de Geneve/HUG) on cognitive health initiatives in Geneva, and Claire Chevalier (HUG) on the development of a probiotics platform for Alzheimer's Disease. Industry experts presented cutting-edge findings on plasma biomarkers and from clinical trials, followed by a special lecture from Sebastian Palmqvist (Lund University) highlighting the value of plasma biomarkers in primary care. The day concluded with a symposium on ageing and senescence, featuring discussions on geroscience and neuroimaging.

On 8 October, the focus shifted to young researcher presentations and new initiatives, concluding with discussions on future plans for meetings and collaborations.

INTERDEM network celebrates its 25th Anniversary at Annual Meeting in Geneva

INTERDEM is a network of researchers interested in psychosocial interventions, made up of more than 600 researchers and academics with different professional disciplines, spread across 20 countries (18 of which are in Europe). The INTERDEM network celebrated its 25th anniversary at its Annual Meeting at the CICG conference centre in Geneva on 7 and 8 October 2024, prior to #34AEC.

On 7 October, the meeting kicked off with a welcome from INTERDEM Chairperson Marjolein de Vugt, to all researchers present. Then there was an introduction to new members by Rabih Chattat, a session chaired by Myrra Vernooij-Dassen titled "Research road map", and a keynote presentation about the WHO's global response to dementia, delivered by Katrin Seeher in a session chaired by Martin Orrell. Other sessions on this first day included an update of the JPND Working Group INTEREST and a business meeting to discuss new initiatives.



ABOVE: INTERDEM network Annual Meeting, Geneva.

On the second day, 8 October, attendees were split into different "taskforce" groups, to discuss topics including Young Onset Dementia, Intersectionality, Inequalities, and Social Health. A final plenary session was chaired by Esme Moniz-Cook on taskforce progress. Lastly, Frans Verhey chaired a session on the INTERDEM Academy that included a presentation of the publication winner Jacoba Huizinga together with Gerda van Tongerloo who reflected on her role in research as a person with dementia.

Alzheimer Europe is proud to be a key partner of INTERDEM.

Meetings of the European Working Group of People with Dementia (EWGPWD) and European Dementia Carers Working Group (EDCWG)



ABOVE: EWGPWD meeting, Geneva.

On 8 October, members of the EWGPWD and EDCWG met in the morning. This was the first face-to-face meeting of members of both working groups in the current term of office. In the meeting of the EWGPWD, members addressed the topic of independent living and housing which is the focus of the 2024 Alzheimer Europe Yearbook. This was followed by the networking event which was attended by delegates with dementia and their supporters.

Members of the EDCWG were informed about a brain health campaign for young adults (people in their early



ABOVE: EDCWG meeting, Geneva.

twenties) which has been developed in the context of two European projects (ADIS and Pattern-Cog) and discussed how this work, which was initially developed in the Spanish context, could be implemented in other countries. Members also addressed the topic of independent living and housing from the perspective of informal carers.

DAY ONE OF #34AEC, 8 OCTOBER

Stefanie Becker, Director of Alzheimer Switzerland and Board Member of Alzheimer Europe, and Jean Georges, Executive Director of Alzheimer Europe, addressed delegates at the Opening Ceremony of the conference, on the afternoon of 8 October.

Stefanie Becker began by saying "For decades, we've been waiting for a breakthrough in dementia treatment, and now, as these innovations emerge, they bring not only hope but also new challenges that people with dementia and their families are already facing". She also noted that innovation is not just about breakthroughs in treatment, but rather it is also about "shifting social attitudes and embracing new technologies to create a truly dementia-inclusive society." Innovation, therefore, also means finding better ways to support people in their daily lives, she affirmed. "Patient and carers' organisations, like Alzheimer Switzerland, are at the forefront and will continue to advocate for everyone, ensuring



ABOVE: Opening Ceremony speakers (left to right): Jean Georges, Stefanie Becker, Salome von Greyerz, Marjolein de Vugt.

that no one is left behind”, she said, emphasising that this is especially the case for those who may not meet the criteria for new treatments. Finally, she highlighted the importance of creating a society where the voices of people with dementia and their caregivers are heard, valued, and acted upon. “This is the foundation of a truly dementia-inclusive society”, she said.

Jean Georges extended a special welcome to the 37 people with dementia among the delegates, as well as to the 50 carers/supporters in attendance. He thanked Alzheimer Europe’s sponsors, including Gold sponsor Lilly, Silver sponsors Biogen, Novo Nordisk, Otsuka, and Terumo, and Bronze sponsors, BioArctic, Bristol Myers Squibb, MSD, Prothena and Roche, and expressed Alzheimer Europe’s gratitude to the CIGC for hosting the event, as well as to the Geneva Convention Bureau, the République et Canton de Genève, and the Switzerland Convention & Incentive Bureau, for their support. Last, but certainly not least, he thanked colleagues at Alzheimer Switzerland and Alzheimer Geneva, for co-hosting the event.

Following these opening words, delegates were addressed by Salome von Greyerz, who welcomed delegates on behalf of the Swiss Federal Office for Public Health, noting that this

year’s conference not only opens up new horizons, but also creates links that are vital for health care professionals, researchers and policy makers and, most importantly, for people with dementia and their caregivers.

A welcome video from Lukas Engelberger, Member of the Executive Council of the Canton of Basel-Stadt, and President of the Swiss Conference of the Cantonal Ministers of Public Health was screened next. You can view the video, here: <https://youtu.be/GO9lrzjPlp0>. Pierre Maudet, State Councillor of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, then stepped up to the lectern, to warmly welcome delegates to Geneva.

The Opening Ceremony was rounded off by Marjolein de Vugt, who addressed delegates in her capacity as Chairperson of the INTERDEM (Early detection and timely INTERvention in DEMentia) network. She emphasised the power of small steps and ‘golden moments’ in dementia. “Dealing with dementia can feel like an insurmountable challenge”, she said, “but breaking it down into small, manageable steps leads to significant improvements in quality of life. These small, everyday victories often bring about ‘golden moments’ of connection and meaning, which are vital in dementia care.” She also stressed the importance of collaboration across psychosocial and biomedical approaches, due to the complexity of dementia, which requires diverse solutions. “Psychosocial innovations, risk reduction strategies, and medical advancements are all important. These approaches should complement each other, offering multiple paths toward a better future”, she stated. In closing, Marjolein de Vugt pointed to INTERDEM’s role in driving innovation, asserting that “as we celebrate 25 years of the INTERDEM network, it’s clear that collaboration is key in psychosocial innovations. By focusing on interventions that enhance resilience, cognitive and social health, and quality of life. INTERDEM embodies the spirit of innovation needed to improve the lives of people living with dementia.”

“Two voices, one story – navigating dementia together”

The first Plenary of the conference was a joint session organised by the members of the European Working Group of People with Dementia (EWGPWD) and the European Dementia Carers Working Group (EDCWG). This was chaired by Jean Georges. The two working groups had decided to focus on the interrelated topics of living with dementia, relationships and independence.

The different presentations provided a balanced overview of what life with dementia can be like, taking into account the very different experiences that people with dementia and carers across Europe may have. People who look at dementia from the outside may hold the view that living life to the full ends on diagnosis but the reality for many people is far removed from this perception. This plenary session set out to illustrate that many who live with dementia, and their carers, have a fierce and positive determination to enjoy themselves and play an active role in their communities. They seek not pity but support. They want empathy rather than sympathy. They require kindness and encouragement not dismissal or rejection.

Paddy Crosbie from Ireland, for example, remembered hearing the words 'It's young onset Alzheimer's' and how he did not know how he'd cope, but he was also told to keep his husband doing what he could for as long as he could and this carried him through.



ABOVE: Plenary 1 speakers (left to right): Trevor Salomon, Liv Thorsen, Lilo Klotz, Shelagh Robinson, Jean Georges, Paddy Crosbie.

Trevor Salomon, a fellow carer from the UK, suggested, "It's easy to see what people living with dementia can no longer do" and encouraged people with dementia and carers/supporters to focus on what is possible, and encourage them to do it. He provided an example of an employer who went to considerable lengths to adapt to the Trevor's wife's needs.

Liv Thorsen from Norway who cares for her husband described their philosophy to living with dementia, emphasising the power of thought and how the way that people think about Alzheimer's disease affects their daily lives and to some extent their experience of dementia.

Shelagh Robinson, a person with dementia from the UK, took a close look at relationships that people with dementia have with others and the nature and quality of those relationships (i.e. whether they are abling or disabling, respectful, smothering or inclusive). She emphasised the importance of being kind to oneself and others, and in the context of spirituality, ended on a positive note with a quote from Julian of Norwich, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well".

Lieselotte (Lilo) Klotz from German shared her first thoughts on hearing her diagnosis, namely, "This can't be, not me", explaining that it was not part of her life plan and how she had not been able to accept for the first few years the many changes and losses she was experiencing. She ended, however, with the statement, "an ordinary day is the greatest blessing".

At the end of the session, there was a short video presentation entitled "I may have Alzheimer's disease, but it doesn't have me", which was recently developed by the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) and Alzheimer Europe. In this video, Chris Roberts, member and former Chairperson of the EWGPWD, talks about the importance of hope and of the timely detection of Alzheimer's disease, adding that he is not defined by the disease. Watch the video, here: <https://youtu.be/1cW92mf5J0o>. Each of the five speakers with lived experience at this first plenary session received rapturous applause from the audience, as did the video.

Parallel sessions

Following the opening ceremony, delegates had the chance to join one of nine parallel sessions. At one such session, titled "People living with dementia", the speakers were all people living with dementia, including the Chairperson of the EWGPWD, Kevin Quaid (Ireland). In his presentation, he shared how getting hearing aids has changed his life for the better.

Another parallel session, organised by Alzheimer Switzerland, was called "Vulnerable Groups: The Swiss situation", while INTERDEM organised an "Academy" session and the LETHE project held a session looking at how technology and Artificial Intelligence can contribute to personalised risk reduction and prevention in dementia. There was also a session showcasing a series of quick oral presentations on psychosocial interventions.

After a short break, a further nine parallel sessions were held, including one exploring issues around minority ethnic groups and dementia, and one organised by the SPAN+, a Dutch project aiming to develop an effective empowerment intervention tailored for individuals with dementia, both at home and in care homes. There was also another session showcasing a series of quick oral presentations, this time on dementia strategies and policies, and Alzheimer Switzerland used this slot to host a session in French, titled "Société solidaire des personnes atteintes d'Alzheimer ou d'une autre démence" ("Solidarity among society for people with Alzheimer's or other dementias").

Prior to the conference, Alzheimer Europe also hosted a networking event and information session, plus a tour of the conference venue for delegates with dementia.

Welcome Reception

To close day one of the conference, a Welcome Reception was held in the foyer of the CICG conference centre, from 18.30 to 20.00. The folk trio CORSIN entertained conference delegates, with René, the yodelling singer and spoon player,

Gérald on the accordion and vocals, and Sylvain on the alphorn, saxophones, musical saw, and bell.

DAY TWO, 9 OCTOBER



ABOVE: Plenary 2 speakers (left to right): Margit Jochum Christin, Alex Gobey, Katrin Seeher, Giovanni Frisoni, Charles Scerri.

The programme on the second day of the conference focused on making dementia a priority and on innovation in dementia care.

Making dementia a priority

On 9 October, the day began with the second plenary of the conference which was on "Making dementia a priority" and was moderated by Charles Scerri (Malta).

Margit Jochum Christin was the first speaker. Responsible for the specialist area "dementia" and co-responsible for the Coordination Centre of the National Dementia Platform at the Federal Office of Public Health, Switzerland, she gave a talk on dementia in Swiss health care policy. Katrin Seeher from the World Health Organization (WHO) Brain Health Unit then discussed key achievements of the WHO's Global Action Plan on Dementia.

The third speaker was Alex Gobey, Director of the Dementia Care Directorate in Malta, whose presentation

focused on the National Dementia Strategy for the Maltese Islands 2024 – 2031, titled 'Reaching New Heights'. The fourth and final speaker at this session was Giovanni Frisoni, Clinical neurologist, full professor of Clinical Neurosciences at the University of Geneva, Switzerland, and director of the Memory Center at Geneva University Hospital, with a presentation about the Swiss Brain Health Plan.

Parallel sessions and special symposia

Nine parallel sessions followed, including an INTERDEM session on "Advances in social health, brain health and methodological research of psychosocial interventions in dementia care", and a session exploring the lived experience of dementia among members of the LGBTQ+ community. This session was chaired by Paddy Crosbie (Ireland), who is a member of the European Dementia Carers Working Group (EDCWG). There was also a session showcasing a series of quick oral presentations on the topic of Artificial intelligence and technology, as well as one about physical activity and dementia, organised by the Synapsis Foundation, at the invitation of our conference co-host Alzheimer Switzerland.

After a short break, four further sessions took place simultaneously. Three of these were special symposia, one of which was on "Preparing for new AD treatments", organised by Alzheimer Europe and supported by the gold sponsorship from Lilly. Another was called "Enhancing impact: bridging dementia research and practice" and was organised by Dutch project DEMPACT, whilst the third was a session for young researchers, titled "Dementia researchers of the future", organised by the Alzheimer Europe Foundation and the INTERDEM Academy, thanks to the support of the silver sponsorship of Biogen. The other session taking place in tandem was another opportunity for attendees to view quick oral presentations, this time on the theme of minority ethnic groups.

After a lunch break, nine further parallel sessions were held, including one called "Empowerment and

self-management", chaired by Sonata Mačiulskytė, Vice-Chairperson of the EDCWG, while Trevor Salomon, Chairperson of the EDCWG, moderated a series of quick oral presentations in a session called "People with dementia". Another parallel session was organised by INTERDEM, which delivered "An intersectional perspective on dementia care research: Understanding and reducing inequities".

Meanwhile, Silver sponsor TERUMO Blood and Cell Technologies held a session discussing "Innovative approaches in Alzheimer's disease: real-world safety and efficacy of therapeutic plasma exchange with albumin replacement", and Alzheimer Switzerland and Swiss Memory Clinics hosted a session titled "Preparing for new horizons: best practices in Switzerland".

At the end of the second day of #34AEC, two further symposia were organised, one of which was supported by Gates Ventures and focused on "European platforms advancing dementia detection, diagnosis and care", while another was organised by the Fondation Médéric Alzheimer. Meanwhile, public involvement in research was the theme of another series of quick oral presentations.

Preparing for new AD treatments



ABOVE: *Special Symposium 1 speakers (left to right): Angela Bradshaw, Cath Mummery, Jan Runar Eliassen, Leonie Visser, Julius Popp.*

At Special Symposium 1, "Preparing for new AD treatments", organised by Alzheimer Europe, chaired by Director for Research Angela Bradshaw and supported by the gold sponsorship from Lilly, four speakers shared the stage. First up was Jan Runar Eliassen (Norway), a member of the EWGPWD, who shared his personal perspective as a person with early-onset Alzheimer's dementia. He was diagnosed at the age of 45 which was a huge shock for him and his family. "In Norway, we are proud of our health care", he said, "but care regarding people with dementia has a long way to go". Jan Runar and his family have had little or no contact or support within their local community since the diagnosis and this is sadly far from a unique story. "When I travel around Norway this is something I hear all over", he said. Thankfully, he and his wife have established good contact with the Norwegian Health Associations and he was asked to be a member of their working group for people with dementia and, more recently, was nominated to the EWGPWD as well. These groups and contacts, as well as joining Norway's "Dementia Choir", a television programme inspired by that of the BBC in the UK, have been a saving grace for Jan Runar and his family. In closing, he stated that his sincere wish for the future of dementia care is that "no one should feel they are alone with this disease".

Cath Mummery spoke about "Moving from research to clinical practice in the treatment of AD". Her presentation highlighted that dementia services are currently primarily community based and are insufficiently resourced, while clinical trials environments are highly-regulated, well-resourced and typically manage patients with minimal comorbidities. The arrival of disease-modifying therapies, and the beginning of a treatment era in dementia, "provides a golden opportunity to reshape services, improve access to diagnostics and reframe conceptualisation of dementia", she said. However, she also emphasised the importance of bridging the gap between the 'real world' and clinical trials. She explored some of the questions that arise from this, and what might be done "to start a journey towards access for all to a biological diagnosis and treatments for dementias."

The next speaker was Julius Popp, head of the Centre for Cognitive Disorders and Alzheimer's disease at the Hirslanden Hospital Zürich and the head of the research group Biomarkers and Neuropsychiatry at the University of Zürich. He pointed out that "the use of biomarkers is often recommended, but is currently still limited by their relative invasiveness, limited availability, and costs." He also said that with new drug therapies targeting specific brain pathologies, biomarkers would become mandatory to determine the presence of pathology and to evaluate the therapy effects on this pathology. Finally, he stated that "blood-based biomarkers and other non-invasive markers will become available for clinical practice in the near future. These developments will lead to a much broader utilisation of biomarkers and accelerate the development of tailored prevention and treatment approaches."



ABOVE: "Dementia Researchers of the future" symposium speakers.

The fourth and final speaker at this symposium was Leonie Visser, PhD, Amsterdam UMC, who began her talk on the paradigm shift in healthcare and professional-patient communication with the assertion that "initiating disease-modifying treatment for AD is a preference-sensitive decision. Shared decision-making is not a new concept, yet it is even more important but also complex, because of the uncertainties regarding the benefits, risk of side effects, and burden of administration and

monitoring". She also noted that, in order to encourage patient engagement and support meaningful conversations about disease-modifying treatment initiation, educational materials and communication tools are needed, and that these should be developed taking a co-creation approach.

"Dementia Researchers of the future" symposium highlights the work of ten early stage researchers who won bursaries to attend and present

The symposium "Dementia researchers of the future" was organised by the Alzheimer Europe Foundation and the INTERDEM Academy, thanks to the support of the silver sponsorship of Biogen.

This session afforded a great opportunity to ten early stage researchers, who were selected by our jury to benefit from bursaries to attend and present at the conference. The selection of these ten bursaries was based on the best average scores each received from the jury members.

Iva Holmerová (Czechia) and Fania Dassen (Netherlands) co-chaired this special symposium, and the ten researchers who presented their work were:

- SS3-01 Özlem Çiçek Doğan (Turkey): Understanding the experiences of individuals with dementia and their caregivers after the Turkey-Syria earthquakes: a qualitative study
- SS3-02 Natalia Soldevila-Domenech (Spain): Predictors of the cognitive response to multimodal lifestyle interventions for cognitive decline prevention: pooled analysis of four clinical trials
- SS3-03 Electra Chatzidimitriou (Greece): The predictive value of social cognition assessment over and above neuroimaging for 1-year functional outcomes in behavioral variant frontotemporal dementia
- SS3-04 Raphaella Paradisi (Greece): Modified Cued Recall test for the diagnosis of dementia of the Alzheimer's

type in a Greek population of adults with Down syndrome: a validation study

- SS3-05 Matěj Kučera (Czech Republic): The role of risk factors in development of cognitive disorders and cognitive decline in the Czech Republic and the Netherlands: comparative SHARE prospective study
- SS3-06 Eda Atay (Turkey): The effect of cognitive stimulation therapy on apathy, loneliness, anxiety and activities of daily living in elderly individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's
- SS3-07 Nina Stopar (Slovenia): Risk factors for dementia among patients in memory clinic
- SS3-08 Marina Makri (Greece): An innovative online educational program on Neurodegenerative Genetic Counseling developed in Greece, Germany, Belgium, Spain and Turkey
- SS3-09 Gabriela Poczatek (Poland): The meanings of the life story of a person living with dementia and their tendency to "wander"-the narrative perspective of Polish caregivers
- SS3-10 Anja Mrhar (Slovenia): The effect of individual characteristics on the level of nutrition related knowledge: exploratory study for older adults across levels of cognitive impairment.

Innovation in dementia care

The third plenary of the conference covered topics related to innovation in dementia care. The session was moderated by Marjolein de Vugt (Netherlands) and Tobias Nef, the first speaker, delivered a presentation titled "Digital Biomarkers to support dementia patients and their caregivers". He is a Full Professor of Gerontechnology and Rehabilitation at the ARTORG Research Center for Biomedical Engineering and the Department of Neurology at the University of Bern, Switzerland.



ABOVE: Plenary 3 speakers (left to right): Lizzy Boots, Esther Loseto-Gerritzen, Aisling Flynn, Tobias Nef, MArjolein de Vugt.

He began by sharing results from a large survey of Swiss nursing staff in various hospitals (<https://matchrn.unibas.ch/>), which found that one of the greatest challenges for nursing staff, particularly at night, is to maintain an overview and decide which patient requires attention at any given time. Tobias Nef and colleagues put together a research project investigating whether the introduction of sensor-based digital nursing assistance systems could help nursing staff to keep track of patients on the ward, prevent unnecessary rounds, intervene quickly in emergencies and reduce stress for nursing staff. The study was conducted on a 22-bed geriatric psychiatric ward (Beyeler Ward, University Psychiatric Services Bern) and the results were good, with both patients and staff responding positively to the system.

The next speaker was Esther Loseto-Gerritzen from the Institute of Mental Health at the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom. She spoke about online peer support for people with Young Onset Dementia, and began by noting that peer support is known to be an important source of post-diagnostic support for this particular group of people. However, she specified, in-person peer support groups are not accessible for everyone.

"Our research shows that the benefits of peer support for people with Young Onset Dementia are not limited to in-person settings", she continued, also pointing out that online peer support can foster social support, information sharing and friendship. "Moreover, it offers unique advantages, such as the ability to engage from the comfort of one's own home and access to a wide range of platforms and modes of communication, allowing people to choose something that suits their needs, abilities and preferences."

Future work, she stressed, should focus on improving signposting, reducing digital exclusion and gathering more quantitative evidence, to inform policy and practice and improve the availability and accessibility of online peer support.

The third speaker at this session was Aisling Flynn, Lecturer in Occupational Therapy, Bournemouth University, United Kingdom, whose talk centred on virtual reality as a means of promoting the social connectedness of people living with dementia and their supporters.

"Given the social health challenges that many people living with dementia face, it is important to explore innovative solutions that promote social connectedness", she began, also stressing that multi-user virtual reality "enables people living with dementia and their caregivers to share immersive experiences, potentially promoting social connectedness, all from the comfort of their own homes."

She concluded her talk by saying that, while still under-researched, multi-user virtual reality "shows significant potential in enhancing social health outcomes for people living with dementia, offering a promising frontier for future research."

The fourth and final speaker in Plenary 3 was Lizzy Boots from the Alzheimer Center Limburg/Maastricht University, Netherlands. In her presentation, "From research and development to implementation - the Evaluation in Life

Cycle of Information Technology (ELICIT) framework” she highlighted the need to involve end-users and potential financiers at an early stage, to build a business case together with stakeholders, to invest in (tailored) training for coaches and ambassadors, and she especially urged researchers to “Stay open” and to “keep on co-creating to improve your innovation. The perspective of ambassadors can help you keep up with new challenges in the ever-changing care climate.”

DAY THREE, 10 OCTOBER



ABOVE: *Rolling for Dementia* campaigner and dementia researcher Golnaz Atefi in Geneva.

The third and final day of the 34th Alzheimer Europe Conference centred around the topics of “Intersectionality in dementia” and “Brain health and prevention”.

Intersectionality in dementia

Plenary four opened the conference programme on this final day, and comprised four presentations revolving around the theme of intersectionality. It was chaired by Maria do Rosário Zincke dos Reis (Portugal). She opened the session, introducing first a short video, before the presentations. The video summarised the journey of dementia researcher Golnaz Atefi, who, during World Alzheimer’s Month this September, skated 1,026 km, setting the Guinness World Record for the farthest distance

ever skated by a female. Golnaz Atefi said, of her journey: “I’m honoured to have accomplished this as part of the Rolling for Dementia campaign, raising awareness about dementia. My mission was to engage with professionals and community members across Europe, finishing at the Alzheimer Europe Conference, to highlight the critical need for inclusivity in dementia care and research.”

Alzheimer Europe was pleased to support this amazing campaign, which was originally set to conclude in September, but due to overwhelming support, the “Rolling for Dementia” journey, both on and off skates, will continue and will run throughout Golnaz Atefi’s fellowship at University College London, continuing to collect and share insights about dementia. “I’m incredibly grateful to Alzheimer Europe for promoting inclusive dementia care, and I’m looking forward to both learning from and sharing the latest advancements in research during the conference”, she concluded. The video can be viewed, here: <https://youtu.be/nJcHHTIjz4Y>

After this short video, the first speaker was welcomed to the stage. Antonella Santucciono Chadha, Founder of the Women’s Brain Foundation, Vice President of Euresearch, and former regulator and pharma executive, spoke about the importance of gender in dementia research, noting that Alzheimer’s disproportionately affects women, both as patients and as caregivers. The Women’s Brain Foundation is exploring how sex and gender impact the disease, with research showing that CDR-SB scores are higher when the informant is either female or a child, which, she pointed, out highlights the need to adjust clinical evaluations.

The second speaker at this plenary session was T. Rune Nielsen, Associate Professor, PhD, Danish Dementia Research Centre, Copenhagen University Hospital & Department of Psychology, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. His talk was on reaching out to and including minority ethnic groups in dementia research

“Minority ethnic groups are not really hard to reach in dementia research, they just require a different mindset

and approach from the researcher”, he began. He also highlighted the fact that most of the practices used to recruit and involve research participants frequently do not consider the diverse needs of minority ethnic groups, and said that “Researchers should be creative and flexible in their recruitment strategies, and consider various possible strategies before starting a project.”



ABOVE: Plenary 4 speakers (left to right): T. Rune Nielsen, John Angel Bond, Eimear McGlinchey, Antonella Santucci.

Next to take the floor was John Angel Bond, a dedicated PhD researcher in dementia studies at the University of Stirling, Scotland, United Kingdom and a committed member of the LGBTQ+ Dementia Advisory Group. He introduced his presentation “Queering Up Dementia Care: The Next Steps” and stressed that this was very much a joint effort together with Mike Parish from the LGBTQ+ Dementia Advisory Group. Their presentation emphasised inclusivity, specialised care, and actionable change for LGBTQ+ individuals living with dementia.

First, it highlighted that LGBTQ+ individuals form a significant yet often overlooked part of the dementia population. “They encounter unique challenges such as social isolation, lack of family support, and the lingering effects of past discrimination. Understanding and addressing these issues is crucial for providing dignified dementia care”, he said.

Secondly, the presentation stressed the importance of implementing inclusive practices in care environments, which, he said, “involves recognising chosen families, creating LGBTQ+ affirming spaces, and providing comprehensive staff training. Tailored care that respects gender identity and sexual orientation is essential.”

Lastly, the presentation advocated for policy reforms, increased funding for LGBTQ+ support organisations, and regular inclusivity training. “These steps are essential to ensure that LGBTQ+ individuals living affected by dementia receive respectful and compassionate care as they navigate dementia, ultimately leading to an improvement in their quality of life”, he finished.

The final speaker was Eimear McGlinchey, Assistant Professor in Intellectual Disability, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland and Faculty at the Global Brain Health Institute. She discussed the link between Down syndrome and Alzheimer’s disease, explaining that virtually all individuals with Down syndrome develop Alzheimer’s disease-related changes in the brain by age 40, and that Alzheimer’s has become the leading cause of death in this population. “These individuals experience a life expectancy more than 20 years shorter than the general population due to this disease”, she stated.

Speaking about the exclusion of Down syndrome from Alzheimer’s research, she said that “despite the overwhelming impact of Alzheimer’s disease on people with Down syndrome, they are often left out of crucial Alzheimer’s research, including clinical trials and post-diagnostic care initiatives. This lack of inclusion deepens existing healthcare inequities and limits access to important treatments.” She also highlighted the importance of advancing global inclusion in Alzheimer’s research, and said that “in order to reduce these inequities, it’s vital to increase the inclusion of people with Down syndrome, particularly from low- and middle-income countries, in global Alzheimer’s disease initiatives. Addressing intersectional issues—such as race, geography,

and socioeconomic status—is critical to providing equitable research, care, and support for this population.”

Parallel sessions and special symposia

Afterwards, attendees were invited to take their coffee break and an opportunity to view the many and varied poster presentations exhibited in the CICG conference centre foyer area. They then had the choice of nine parallel sessions, including one organised by our event co-hosts Alzheimer Switzerland which looked at remote/mobile care, another organised by INTERDEM and focusing on advance care planning, and one session with a series of quick oral presentations on the theme of brain health and prevention. There was also a parallel session about Public Involvement in dementia research.

Meanwhile, as part of a parallel session about “Campaigning for change”, Owen Miller, Policy Officer at Alzheimer Europe, discussed the importance of involving the dementia community in campaigning for change at a European level. He shared details of our EU campaign work in 2024, stemming from the Helsinki Manifesto - an outline of the current situation of dementia in Europe that details specific demands for the European Commission and national governments. This Manifesto was launched just prior to our Annual Conference in Helsinki last year and we have since used it as a campaigning tool around the European Parliament elections in June 2024 and have also launched a public Call to Action, which can be signed by individuals, here: <https://bit.ly/AECallToAction2024>. Find out more about the Helsinki Manifesto, including which organisations and entities have already endorsed it and how your organisation can go about supporting it, here: <https://bit.ly/AEHelsinkiManifesto>. Owen Miller was joined by Ilaria Mazzacane from Federazione Alzheimer Italia, who gave insights on how her organisation implemented the campaign at a national level in Italy, and Kevin Quaid, Chairperson of the European Working Group of People with Dementia, who highlighted how vital it was to include lived experience as part of this campaign.

After a short break, three further sessions took place simultaneously. Two of these were special symposia, one on “New dementia assistive technologies to transform lives: Presenting the innovators of the Longitude Prize on Dementia”, whilst the other, organised by Essity, delved into “Support for caregiving relatives in continence care”. The third session was a chance for delegates to view quick oral presentations on the theme of living with dementia.

After a lunch break, eight further parallel sessions were held, including one on end-of-life care, one on stigma and discrimination and another, organised by the eBRAIN-Health project, sought to advance our understanding of the brain and looked at developing personalised therapies for dementia and other neurodegenerative diseases. A final series of quick oral presentations looked at the area of detection and diagnosis, while Alzheimer Switzerland held a German language session called “Demensensible Gesellschaft – Beiträge von Alzheimer Schweiz” (“Dementia-sensitive society – contributions from Alzheimer Switzerland”).

Following a coffee break and a last opportunity to view poster presentations, the final plenary of the conference took place.

Brain health and prevention



ABOVE: Plenary 5 speakers (left to right): Bogdan Draganski, Ira Haraldsen, Daniela S. Jopp, Jean-Charles Lambert, Giovanni Frisoni.

The fifth and final plenary session at the conference was on the topic of "Brain health and prevention" and was moderated by Giovanni Frisoni (Switzerland). Kicking off the session, the first speaker was Daniela S. Jopp, Professor of Psychology, whose work at the Institute of Psychology and LIVES Center of Competence on Life-span, University of Lausanne, focuses on adult development and ageing. In a presentation called "Healthy ageing – is it possible to escape dementia?", she emphasised that dementia is not the "natural fate" of individuals reaching age 100. Indeed, the cognitive capacity of centenarians is very heterogenous, she said, ranging from high functioning to strong cognitive limitations.

The second speaker was Jean-Charles Lambert, PhD, Inserm Research Director, Head of the team "Search for molecular determinants of Alzheimer's disease and related disorders" at the Université de Lille, Institut Pasteur de Lille, France. His talk centred on the question "When does dementia become inescapable?" and explored the role of genetics. "Alzheimer's disease has a strong genetic component, and its characterisation is a major goal of Alzheimer's disease research in order to better understand the pathophysiological processes involved and to propose new therapeutic targets", he highlighted. However, he also noted that "with the exception of the rare monogenic forms, for which a genetic council can be proposed, the use of this genetic information is not relevant at a clinical level for the common forms", also mentioning that personalised medicine may be possible with the advent of immunotherapy.

Ira Haraldsen, MD, PhD, from the Department of Neurology at Oslo University Hospital, Norway spoke next, sharing results from the AI-Mind project, of which she is the coordinator. Regarding the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance early dementia detection, she stated that "Artificial intelligence enables more accurate risk prediction by integrating diverse data sources, identifying patterns that are often missed by conventional methods." She also emphasised, concerning proactive risk management, that AI "can predict dementia onset

years before clinical symptoms appear, allowing for timely interventions and personalised care planning". Finally, regarding some of the challenges and future directions, she said that "while promising, AI models must address ethical concerns around information without cure, data privacy, interpretability, and population-specific generalisability to ensure they are clinically viable and ethically sound".

Finally, Bogdan Draganski, Professor at the Neurozentrum – Inselspital, University of Bern, Switzerland, discussed new preventative approaches for vascular dementia. Vascular dementia is a very common, but under-investigated brain health problem associated with increasing age, he began. "There are several cognitive domains including planning, attention and emotional flexibility, that show deficits due to small vessel disease", he continued, also pointing out that the condition can remain undetected until verified using brain imaging techniques.

"There is close interrelation between some forms of vascular dementia and cerebral amyloid angiopathy, which is common in patients with Alzheimer's disease showing a prevalence of 50%. The most common symptoms leading to diagnosis are related to spontaneous brain haemorrhages", he said. In closing, he also highlighted that the appearance of the "so-called white matter hyperintensities" in brain imaging should be taken seriously. "Efficient and consequent treatment of cardio- and cerebro-vascular risk factors, especially in the middle age can prevent the progression of vascular dementia", he concluded.

Au revoir Genève, auf Wiedersehen Genf, arrivederci Ginevra! ... E buongiorno Bologna!

The closing ceremony of the conference included comments from Maria do Rosário Zincke dos Reis, in her capacity as our Chairperson. She took the opportunity to thank all of the delegates and speakers "for making these three days such a fantastic time by sharing experiences and knowledge from different perspectives as people with dementia, carers, researchers, healthcare



ABOVE: *Maria do Rosário Zincke dos Reis, speaking at the Closing Ceremony.*

and social professionals. Different perspectives but with a common goal: To improve the quality of life of people with dementia and carers.” She also thanked all of our corporate sponsors, including gold sponsor Lilly, silver sponsors Biogen, Novo Nordisk, Otsuka and Terumo and bronze sponsors BioArctic, Bristol Myers Squibb, MSD, Prothena and Roche. Finally, she said a huge thanks to the Alzheimer Europe team for all the hard work in making the conference happen and to our co-hosts Alzheimer Switzerland.

Hans Stöckli, President of Alzheimer Switzerland expressed gratitude for the support provided by Swiss partners and especially the CICG conference centre for providing us with free rental and audiovisual support. He also gave a big thanks to the Swiss institutional speakers who spoke at the opening ceremony on Tuesday and finally, thanked the translators and all the local staff for their help and support.

Mario Possenti, Secretary General of Federazione Alzheimer Italia, then took to the stage to invite delegates to the 35th Alzheimer Europe Conference, “Connecting science and communities: The future of dementia care”, taking place in Bologna, Italy, from 6 - 8 October 2025. Save the dates!

A short video, introducing Bologna as our next host location, was shown. You can view it, here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=Nqy58pGnpy6ivKt-T&v=oghB0JVyP7I&feature=youtu.be>