




# We need early and accurate dementia diagnosis

1 in 5 of us (20%) still think dementia is just a natural part of ageing and it can't be stopped. But that's wrong.

Dementia is caused by physical diseases, like Alzheimer's, and diseases can be cured. There are still no treatments in the UK to slow or stop these diseases, but each new research discovery brings us closer to finding one. The ability to diagnose early is vital for making these treatments a reality.

**As of February 2022, only 61.7% of those aged 65 or over thought to be living with dementia in England have a diagnosis.**

## Why get a dementia diagnosis?

- 1 Getting a dementia diagnosis is key to unlocking access to personalised care and support as well as existing treatments. It will enable people to plan ahead and identify any potential ways to improve their brain health. An accurate diagnosis will directly impact how a person's medicines are prescribed and managed, as clinical recommendations differ depending on the cause(s) of dementia. 
- 2 Changes in the brain can happen up to 10-15 years before people notice clinical symptoms like memory loss. New testing tools and technologies mean we can now see some of these changes and **diagnose diseases like Alzheimer's earlier** in their development. 
- 3 Clinical trials for disease-modifying treatments increasingly target earlier stages of the diseases that cause dementia. An **early and accurate diagnosis** may offer greater opportunities to participate in these trials, increasing our chances of finding life-changing treatments. **People won't be able to access such treatments without an early and accurate diagnosis.** 

But the **UK still has much further to go before we can widely and equitably offer early stage, accurate diagnoses.**

## What needs to change in healthcare?

**Today, people typically first seek help when they or a loved one notice worrying symptoms, such as a change in their memory or thinking.** If their GP suspects dementia after ruling out other possible causes of concern, they may then be referred for a more specialist assessment (e.g. in a memory clinic).



If we can improve access to key diagnostic tests for all services in the UK, we can move towards earlier and more accurate diagnosis. And **the earlier we intervene, the better our chances** of stopping or slowing down the condition. Alzheimer's Research UK is working with healthcare partners to help the UK shift to diagnosing earlier and more accurately.

"My dad clearly struggled to manage the stresses of his job, watching him go to work every day almost in tears was horrible. But without a diagnosis, a lot of people can't retire early or benefit from schemes they have been paying into all their lives.

"... Alzheimer's is never fun. But understanding what it is and being able to deal with it would make it a lot less painful."

**Zac Sherwani**, son of gold-medal winning Olympian Imran Sherwani. Imran lives with early-onset Alzheimer's disease.