

Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Research Center at USU Celebrates First Anniversary, Seeks Research Participants

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Dr. Beth Fauth, right, is the director of the Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Research Center (ADRC).

Research for the Sake of People

As Dr. Elizabeth Fauth, professor of Human Development and Family Studies at USU, began working on a collaborative effort to pursue state funding for a research center focusing on Alzheimer's disease and dementia, she had many opportunities to reflect on the moments in her life that inspired her to work in gerontology and dementia care.

These moments all involved the people Fauth had met throughout her life who had been touched by dementia: the woman with dyed black hair who had Alzheimer's disease and the ability to drink six coffee creamer packets in a row before Beth could serve her coffee while working in assisted living; the hardworking mom who juggled a family, a career, and visits to her mom in a care facility; the loving husband who was determined to learn how to do his wife's hair for her as she began to exhibit early signs of dementia.

Fauth's desire to research dementia and how it impacts individuals and caregivers has deep roots in her desire to help people live fuller, richer lives, regardless of the challenges they may face. Now the director of the Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Research Center

(ADRC) at USU, Fauth is celebrating the center's successes in its first year and looking forward to a rich future of research, education, and service.

"I'm so proud of this team we're pulling together in Alzheimer's research and support," said Fauth. "We have always had the goal of doing important research not just for the sake of research, but for people living with dementia and their families. Now that the ADRC is operating with key team members in place, we are even more poised to understand Alzheimer's disease and help the dementia community in Utah."

In its first year, the ADRC distributed \$375K to support new and ongoing dementia research. 15 faculty across multiple disciplines at USU are actively affiliated with the center, many of whom are creating research opportunities for students at USU, delivering research presentations to national societies and state non-profits, and publishing articles in scientific journals.

As it moves into its second year, the ADRC will work to continue to understand the pathology of dementia-related diseases, support the improvement and development of resources for individuals with dementia and their caregivers, and contribute to the education of individuals and policymakers.

Innovative research on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias remains the center's primary focus. While multiple projects are underway, continue reading to learn about two research studies through the ADRC that are currently seeking participants.

Ongoing Research Opportunities at the ADRC

Assessing a self-guided online Acceptance and Commitment Therapy program for dementia caregivers



Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is an action-oriented therapy method that focuses on acceptance of thoughts and feelings and commitment to act in alignment with personal values. It has been shown to be an effective therapy for depression and anxiety, chronic pain, and certain disorders, and USU researchers are now examining its effectiveness in an online format for caregivers of people with dementia.

ACT for Caregivers is a web-based, self-paced program that was created by researchers at USU. Through the program, caregivers learn about dementia, develop research-based skills to cope with distress, and practice focusing on what matters most to them. ACT for Caregivers is accessed entirely online using a computer, smartphone, or any device with internet access, making it highly accessible for those in areas with limited access to mental health resources. The course consists of six 30-45-minute modules completed over the course of four weeks, and users can move through the course at their own pace.

Researchers are currently recruiting individuals to try ACT for Caregivers. Participants should be currently caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease, dementia, or memory loss, but they do not have to be living with the person with dementia to participate.

For more information on the study or to see if you qualify to participate, contact research coordinator Jacob Gossner at ACTforCaregivers@usu.edu or 435-797-1715.

Researching the effects of hearing aid use on cognition in older adults with hearing loss



Dr. Naveen Nagaraj, assistant professor in Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education at USU, is studying the effects of hearing aid use on cognition in older adults with hearing loss. Age-related hearing loss is recognized as a risk factor for dementia. While prior studies have suggested that hearing aids are beneficial because they improve social engagement (which indirectly improves

cognition), Nagaraj is seeking to gather neurophysiological evidence that supports these observations.

To assess the cognitive and neurophysiological benefits of hearing aids, Nagaraj and his team will conduct a study using functional near-infrared spectroscopy, which is a relatively low cost, non-invasive, and portable method of assessing brain activity. The team will assess changes in neural connectivity between different parts of the brain as a function of wearing hearing aids.

The team's long-term plan is to understand the social, cognitive, and neural benefits of increased access to hearing aid interventions in rural areas. They are currently recruiting individuals over the age of 60 with hearing loss who have not used hearing aids previously to participate in their research. For more information, email sound.science@usu.edu or call 435-797-0714.

Additional Ways to Get Involved with the ADRC

Join us in our ongoing mission to research dementia and related disorders, provide service with community partners, and train a dementia competent workforce. Our primary goals are to provide additional resources for caregivers and support through research opportunities.

- Have you or your loved ones have been impacted by Alzheimer's disease or dementia? We want to hear from you. Send your story to adrc@usu.edu.
- Keep up to date with the latest from the ADRC. [Email us](#) or visit our [website](#) to subscribe to our newsletter.
- Your donations matter! If you'd like to contribute to the ADRC's mission of research and outreach, visit adrc.usu.edu.