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World-first app to lead fight against Alzheimer's disease

Brain health enters the digital age

Ita Buttrose, National President of Alzheimer's Australia, has heralded an Australian-developed, world-first app as the latest digital tool in the global fight against Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

Based on the latest scientific research that links brain health and a reduced risk of dementia, to a healthy heart and cardiovascular system, *BrainyApp* is the world's first dementia risk reduction app designed to help people monitor and improve their Brain-Heart health.

"Most people are aware of what they can do to reduce their risk of heart disease, diabetes and stroke but what isn't well known is that these same lifestyle choices may also lower the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and other kinds of dementia," Ms Buttrose said.

Developed by Alzheimer's Australia and the Bupa Health Foundation, *BrainyApp* helps users monitor and improve the physical, mental, dietary and social aspects of their lifestyle.

"The number of Australians with dementia is expected to dramatically increase from 267,000 today to 385,000 people by 2020 – up by almost 50 per cent in just eight years," says Dr Christine Bennett, Chair of the Bupa Health Foundation Steering Committee.

"This alarming prospect should prompt us all to take actions that can keep our brains as well as our bodies healthy."

"As well as lifestyle choices, proper management of cardiovascular risk factors like high blood pressure and high cholesterol are also important for brain health," she said.

"The idea is that what is good for the heart is also good for the brain."

Dr Michael Valenzuela, head of the Regenerative Neuroscience Group at the University of NSW and author of *Maintain Your Brain* (ABC Books) helped to develop *BrainyApp*.

"People need to start thinking about their brain health earlier in life. The changes in the brain that lead to dementia can start when people are in their 30s and 40s," Dr Valenzuela said.

"Although the evidence is still developing, we are learning that there are a wide range of lifestyle choices and activities that can improve brain health, and which in turn may reduce the risk of dementia".

BrainyApp allows users to take a Brain-Heart health survey about their diet, exercise patterns and lifestyle. It then provides suggestions and ideas about how to improve.

BrainyApp also includes all-new brain games, and encourages users to build Brain-Heart points by staying physically and mentally active, socialising with friends and family, and sharing their progress on Facebook.

One of the brain games – Word Tennis – requires players to unscramble anagrams in order to move a paddle and hit a ball back to their opponent.

Ita Buttrose says it is quite a challenge but also good fun.

"I'm looking forward to improving my Brain-Heart score. I expect it might help improve my Scrabble game too," she said.

BrainyApp is available as a free download for users of iPhone, iPod and iPad devices from the App Store.

BrainyApp adds to a range of new and innovative technologies such as interactive websites and GPS tracking devices to assist people with dementia, being developed by Alzheimer's Australia.

More information about *BrainyApp* is available at www.brainyapp.com.au

Users who download *BrainyApp* by 29 November can also enter a competition to win an iPad2.

TAKE ON ALZHEIMER'S GAME ON AUSTRALIA



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Alzheimer's Australia is the charity for people with dementia and their families and carers. As the peak body, it provides advocacy, support services, education and information.

National Dementia Helpline: 1800 100 500 - An interpreter service is available

www.fightdementia.org.au

(The National Dementia Helpline is an Australian Government Initiative)

About the Bupa Health Foundation

The Bupa Health Foundation helps build a healthier Australian community through its support of important health research, health education and other healthy living programs. Established as a charitable foundation in 2005, the Bupa Health Foundation has partnered in over 60 initiatives nationally, with a combined investment of around \$17 million, across its key focus areas: promoting wellness, managing chronic disease, healthy ageing, empowering people about their health; and keeping healthcare affordable. www.bupa.com.au/foundation