

Media Release

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Living with dementia and enjoying a holiday

Everyone enjoys a holiday, and according to the authors of award-winning book, *My home, my life – people with dementia can too*.

In Australia alone, an estimated 436,366 people live with dementia, with this number only expected to rise as our population lives longer and grows older.

Director of HammondCare's Dementia Centre, and co-author of the award winning book *My home, my life*, Professor Colm Cunningham said going on holiday can be relaxing and enjoyable for people with dementia and carers, and outlined some important tips* to make the experience as smooth as possible:

1. Plan and pack early - new environments or a break from routine can be stressful for people with dementia so it is important to book your transport, accommodation and daily itinerary in advance where possible. Ensure all passports are up to date, and create a list of everything that is packed for each person travelling.
2. Type of holiday - the extent to which dementia affects a persons' life will influence the type of holiday you choose, whether it is visiting and staying with family and friends, independent travel, package holidays or specialist services. It is important to consider the type of holiday that best suits the individual and their interests.
3. Talk with hotel staff, family and friends – help them to understand what your needs are and how they can help.
4. Keep medication readily accessible – when travelling, pack one lot of medication and keep another on the person with dementia. A copy of dosages and instructions on how to take the medicines should also be recorded and readily accessible.
5. Check your travel insurance – often, travel insurance does not cover 'pre-existing' medical conditions which may not cover illness or accidents relating to dementia. It is also important to be aware of nearby hospitals and medical centres.
6. Travel off peak, if possible – this enables hotel staff to have more time to help out if needed and can reduce the stress of crowds and traffic.

“Be aware that the person with dementia who is independent in familiar surroundings may need extra support when coping with a new environment,” Prof Cunningham said.

“Holidays give us time to relax and unwind from our busy and often stressful routines to enjoy quality time with family and friends, and people with dementia deserve the same experience.”

* These and many other ideas to support people living with dementia are available in *My home, my life: Practical ideas for people with dementia and carers*, named the 2018 Ageing Book of the Year by the Australasian Journal on Ageing.

Media: Professor Colm Cunningham is available to be interviewed. For more information contact Peter Hallett on 0418 532 585 or phallett@hammond.com.au

HammondCare: HammondCare provides health, aged and dementia care expertise that empowers the people that we serve. Regarded nationally and internationally as one of Australia's most innovative health and aged care providers, HammondCare offers hospital care, residential care and community services. HammondCare is an independent Christian charity