

# Dementia research and the Innovative Medicines Initiative

MOPEAD is one of a number of projects focusing on Alzheimer’s disease and dementia that are funded by the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI). In this article, Elisabetta Vaudano, IMI Principal Scientific Officer, outlines some of the challenges in finding a cure for Alzheimer’s disease and how collaboration helps tackle them.



Elisabetta Vaudano

Dementia and Alzheimer’s disease (AD) still lack efficacious treatments. Sadly, we witness one trial failure after the other in this field, while the burden of disease continues to rise. We simply still know too little, and lack sufficient understanding of all complex facets of dementia/AD to move from incremental progress to the breakthrough everybody is waiting for.

The last 10 to 15 years have seen a boost in investment in Europe and worldwide in this area of research (albeit still at levels not comparable to other areas, e.g. cancer) which is a positive evolution. A major problem remaining is still that of fragmentation, with precious resources lost by duplication of efforts and insufficient sharing of results and lessons learnt across the whole ecosystem and all stakeholders. In addition, it is necessary to look at this research area in a holistic and programmatic manner.

IMI is a good example on how these principles are put into practice. IMI has a strategic advisory group (the Strategic Governing Group Neurodegeneration) providing a programmatic framework for its activities on dementia research. IMI has consequently delivered a rich portfolio of projects along the value chain: from understanding of disease biology, to discovery of new targets and definition of a better taxonomy of disease, to the development of new tools and methods for research and development of new treatments and for patient engagement and use of real world data.

Academics, clinicians, industry (large and small-and-medium size enterprises, from the pharmaceutical space and beyond), regulators, and most importantly patients throughout Europe work side by side in each project in a spirit of open collaborative innovation, and this model works! IMI projects are delivering valuable assets for clinical dementia research that may have a rapid impact on the latest phases of development of treatments, where the costs and the attrition are highest. These include a Europe-wide registry of people at risk of, or with dementia, a European readiness cohort for clinical trials, a highly trained clinical trial network, new biomarkers and clinical endpoints.

“The Innovative Medicines Initiative has delivered a rich portfolio of projects along the value chain”

*Elisabetta Vaudano*

The MOPEAD project adds an important element to the IMI dementia portfolio, that of the challenge of detection of the “hidden”

dementia in different European countries, with all its important connotations as a public health problem on one side and psychological and cultural aspects on the other. MOPEAD extends the IMI partnership to an important stakeholder group, that of general practitioners and will provide important learnings on how to best engage with them and related challenges. We are now in an important phase for the design of the next European research framework programme. In the following months, Horizon Europe will involve citizens more closely in the development of the programme, notably by incorporating them in the design and implementation of a limited number of highly visible missions.

Will our society consider the fight against dementia a bold, inspirational goal worth to be singled out as one of these relevant missions? If so, IMI projects are delivering some very relevant results, which may foster and provide valuable learnings for the shaping of such an ambitious and exciting initiative.



innovative medicines initiative