



Alzheimer's
Disease
International

A photograph of an elderly couple smiling outdoors. The man is on the left, wearing glasses and a brown jacket. The woman is on the right, also smiling. They are surrounded by green foliage. A red gradient overlay covers the bottom half of the image, where the title text is located.

Dementia as a Non-Communicable Disease

Advocacy Toolkit

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Background

For a long time we have used phrases like “what is good for the heart is good for the head” and have known that vascular and cardiometabolic conditions, in particular, increase the risk of developing dementia.

This is why dementia’s inclusion in the recent UN Declaration on Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) is so timely and important and opens the door for associations around the world to advocate for better inclusion and integration of dementia, into what are often more robust and better funded NCD frameworks and plans.

Through this toolkit, we aim to support associations to translate this global commitment into concrete national action, providing evidence, messaging and practical tools needed to advocate for the meaningful change.

Purpose of the toolkit

This toolkit provides advocates, policymakers, NGOs, caregivers, and health professionals with resources to:

- Advocate for recognition of dementia as an NCD
- Strengthen national and local policy responses
- Raise public awareness and reduce stigma
- Mobilise community and stakeholder engagement
- Promote dementia care, research, and caregiver support in the context of NCDs

Why is dementia an NCD?

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are long-term health conditions that are not passed from person to person, and can include cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and chronic respiratory conditions. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), they cause over 70% of global deaths and burden individuals, families, and economies. Governments often address NCDs collectively through policies and funding to tackle shared risk factors like tobacco use, unhealthy diets, and lack of physical activity.

Despite the many shared risk factors, dementia has frequently been excluded from NCD frameworks, despite estimates forecasting that 78 million will be living with the condition by 2030. This omission limits resources, sidelines dementia in health plans and hinders risk reduction efforts that could prevent or delay 45% of cases, per The Lancet Commission. This is particularly poignant, given dementia is currently the 7th leading cause of death globally, and will by the 3rd leading cause of death by 2040. Without inclusion, Alzheimer and dementia associations cannot access NCD budgets, policies or frameworks, which are often labelled broadly rather than tied to specific conditions. As a result, people with dementia and their carers miss out on vital support, while governments remain unprepared for the growing impact of dementia on societies.

In essence, dementia requires long-term prevention, treatment, care and support, similar to other NCDs.



The United Nation's declaration

Introduction

Over the past two years, ADI has been at the forefront of advocating for dementia's recognition as a leading NCD. This effort has involved engaging UN Member States, publishing research, hosting events, and working closely with stakeholders and the media.

This advocacy culminated at the UN's fourth High-Level Meeting on NCDs in September 2025, where the Political Declaration included dementia for the first time and was subsequently adopted by Member States in December. By naming dementia, the declaration opens doors for better policy alignment, funding access and collaboration with other NCD communities that share risk factors.

Following the declaration, this advocacy toolkit is designed to enable our member associations or interested stakeholders to advocate for the better integration of dementia into NCD platforms, strategies and budgets. It covers multilateral tools like the WHO Global Action Plan on Dementia, network-building, and turning global commitments into local action to reduce prevalence and improve care.



Unlocking access to NCD frameworks and how this relates to the creation of National Dementia Plans

The Political Declaration provides a powerful opportunity to strengthen the links between national responses to dementia and broader strategies for noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

Although dementia is frequently omitted from NCD frameworks and policies, the dementia community has long recognised it as an NCD. This is reflected in the World Health Organization's Global Action Plan on the Public Health Response to Dementia 2017–2025 (now extended to 2031), where the target for Action Area 3 explicitly states that “the relevant global targets defined in the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2013–2020, and any future revisions, are achieved for risk reduction and reported.”

Despite this alignment, the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases itself does not mention dementia or Alzheimer's disease. This omission underscores the need to use the Political Declaration as a mechanism to bridge the gap, ensuring that dementia is fully integrated within future NCD policies.

Unlocking access to NCD frameworks will require many of the same tools and methodologies that have proven effective in raising awareness of dementia and securing policy commitment, namely, building strong networks and directly engaging governments and policymakers to drive lasting change.

Over the following pages, ADI has highlighted organisations that may be useful in helping you build or strengthen your network, along with core advocacy messages, and key myth-busting information to address common objections to including dementia within NCD policies and frameworks. You will also find template letters that can be adapted to support outreach—whether to establish new partnerships, suggest a joint awareness raising campaign or to inform and engage government representatives.

It is important to recognise, however, that the Political Declaration is not the panacea. In some countries and contexts, organisations may find greater traction by leveraging dementia through alternative policy avenues, such as disability rights, ageing, or neurological conditions.

Nevertheless, the declaration offers an additional instrument in the advocacy toolkit, providing a strategic opportunity to ensure that dementia is recognised and addressed as a major public health condition.



Advocacy tools and objectives



Suggested elevator pitch

Dementia is a chronic, progressive condition affecting millions globally. Like heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, it requires long-term management and prevention strategies. Recognizing dementia as an NCD ensures resources, planning, and rights for patients and caregivers. Dementia must be integrated into NCD policies for equitable and sustainable care.



Stakeholder mapping

Identify and engage:

- Ministries of Health, Social Welfare, Finance
- NCD alliances
- Hospitals & health training institutions
- Community leaders & media
- NGOs & patient advocacy organizations
- International partners (WHO, other Alzheimer's & dementia associations)



Focus areas and goals

| Focus Areas | Goals |
|--------------------------|---|
| Policy | Include dementia in NCD frameworks, national health plans, aging strategies |
| Health Systems Financing | Integration into primary care, early detection programme, referral pathways. Allocate public funding and insurance coverage for dementia services |
| Awareness Research | Reduce stigma through education and public campaigns. Increase investment in treatment, care models, prevention |
| Caregiver Support | Recognise unpaid care, provide training and respite services |

Advocacy tools and objectives

Tactics

Policy advocacy

1. Develop policy briefs & position statements
2. Meet with government representatives
3. Advocate for national dementia plans
4. Advocate for dementia registries, like other NCDs

Public awareness campaigns

1. Media engagements, radio/TV segments
2. Social media campaigns (#DementialsAnNCD)
3. Awareness during World Alzheimer's Month

Community mobilization

1. Support for caregivers (iSupport & mDementia)
2. Screening events for older adults

Evidence generation

1. Use data to inform policy briefs
2. Aim to showcase economic impact of dementia
3. Collect caregiver burden stories
4. Link this to iSupport (and possibly mDementia)



Who to contact for support and build your network



NCD Alliance

The NCD Alliance is a global civil society network uniting over 2,000 organisations across 170 countries to combat non-communicable diseases through advocacy, capacity-building, and policy action. It works to integrate prevention and care for all NCDs, promote health equity, and support national and regional alliances in advancing the global NCD agenda.

ADI is a member of the NCD Alliance and continues to work closely with them to better integrate dementia into advocacy and awareness raising activities.



info@ncdalliance.org



Regional NCD Alliances

Extensive lists of key stakeholders in each region can be found via these regional websites



East Africa NCD Alliance

The East Africa NCD Alliance an umbrella organisation representing national NCD alliances across East Africa. It advocates for stronger regional collaboration on NCD prevention, treatment, and financing, and promotes joint advocacy on shared risk factors and access to care.



administrator@eancda.org



East Mediterranean NCD Alliance

A coalition of national and regional non-governmental organizations, uniting efforts to advocate, lobby, and take action to reduce, manage, prevent, and control Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) within Eastern Mediterranean Countries (EMR).



contact@emrncda.org



Who to contact for support and build your network



Africa NCD Network (ANN)

The East Africa NCD Alliance an umbrella organisation representing national NCD alliances across East Africa. It advocates for stronger regional collaboration on NCD prevention, treatment, and financing, and promotes joint advocacy on shared risk factors and access to care.



info@ncdsafrica.org



Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC)

HCC is a regional alliance of health and civil society organisations working to reduce the burden of NCDs in Caribbean populations. The HCC advocates for policy change, supports research and youth engagement, and partners with governments to promote health equity.



hcc@healthycaribbean.org



Healthy Latin America Coalition (CLAS)

CLAS is a network of civil society organisations promoting public health and NCD prevention throughout Latin America. CLAS supports advocacy on tobacco control, nutrition, and equitable health access, and provides a platform for coordinated regional action on shared NCD priorities.



South East Asia Regional NCD Alliance

The South East Asia Regional NCD Alliance is a regional collaboration of civil society and government partners across South East Asia



Who to contact for support and build your network

Disability and Ageing Organisations



HelpAge International

HelpAge International is an international network advancing the rights and wellbeing of older people in over 80 countries. HelpAge focuses on healthy ageing, social protection, and health system strengthening, offering opportunities to collaborate on shared goals around ageing and dementia.



info@helpage.org



Age International

Age International is a charity which responds to the needs and promotes the rights of older people, focused on those facing challenging situations in low and middle-income countries.



contact@ageinternational.org.uk



CommonAge

CommonAge is an accredited Commonwealth civil society charitable organisation, advocating to ensure that older people are fully recognised in society, and are supported and enabled to live well in an all age-inclusive Commonwealth.



secretariat@commage.org



European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA)

ECDA is a coalition of European medical and patient organisations uniting efforts to prevent and manage chronic diseases. ECDA provides policy recommendations to European institutions, promotes research collaboration, and advocates for a holistic NCD strategy across Europe.



info@alliancechronicdiseases.org





Who to contact for support and build your network

Disability and Ageing Organisations



International Disability Alliance (IDA)

IDA is a global network representing organisations of people with disabilities, advocating for the rights, inclusion, and full participation of all people with disabilities in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



info@ida-secretariat.org



International Federation on Ageing (IFA)

The IFA is a global network of organisations, governments, academics, and industry partners working to improve the quality of life for older people. The IFA advocates for healthy ageing, age-friendly environments, and the inclusion of older people in policies and programmes worldwide.



The Global Alliance For the Rights of Older People (GAROP)

Established in 2011, the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People was born out of the need to strengthen the rights and voice of older people globally. Today, GAROP is a network of over 400 members worldwide.



info@rightsofolderpeople.org



Dispelling myths



Myth: Dementia is not an NCD

A common misconception is that dementia is not an NCD. This misconception continues to limit recognition, funding, and inclusion of dementia in national and international NCD frameworks. In reality, dementia shares the same characteristics, risk factors and public health challenges as other major NCDs such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. In fact, some of the major NCDs are themselves risk factors for dementia, including diabetes, obesity, stroke etc.



Fact: Dementia fits the NCD Framework

Dementia meets the official definition of a non-communicable disease. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), NCDs are health conditions that are not passed from person to person, and are influenced by a combination of non-modifiable and modifiable risk factors. Dementia aligns with these criteria: it cannot be transmitted from one individual to another, and its development is shaped by age, genetics, and lifestyle factors.

Recognition of dementia as an NCD was formally reinforced in the Political Declaration from the United Nations' Fourth High-Level Meeting on NCDs (September 2025), where dementia was explicitly mentioned for the first time. This inclusion signals a clear global acknowledgement that dementia requires the same priority, investment and system-level focus as other NCDs such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Dispelling myths



Fact: Dementia shares risk factors with other NCDs

Dementia shares modifiable risk factors with other NCDs, making its inclusion critical for comprehensive public health approaches. According to The Lancet Commission (2024) up to 45% of dementias could be prevented or delayed by addressing risk factors such as: tobacco use, hypertension, physical inactivity and obesity. Many of these risk factors are identical to those for other recognised NCDs such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and certain cancers.

In fact, the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Action Plan on the Public Health Response to Dementia 2017–2025 explicitly aligns dementia prevention with global NCD risk reduction targets, reinforcing that dementia prevention cannot be separated from broader NCD prevention efforts. By embedding dementia within national NCD frameworks, countries can leverage existing prevention campaigns, strengthen health system efficiency, and promote integrated care approaches that benefit multiple conditions simultaneously.



Integrating dementia into NCD frameworks improves care access

Excluding dementia from NCD frameworks limits access to funding, prevention programmes and coordinated care. When dementia is integrated into NCD strategies, countries can use existing pathways for early diagnosis, risk reduction and ongoing support already established for other NCDs. This enables people with dementia and their carers to benefit from more timely diagnosis, better care coordination and inclusion in public health planning, rather than dementia being addressed in isolation.

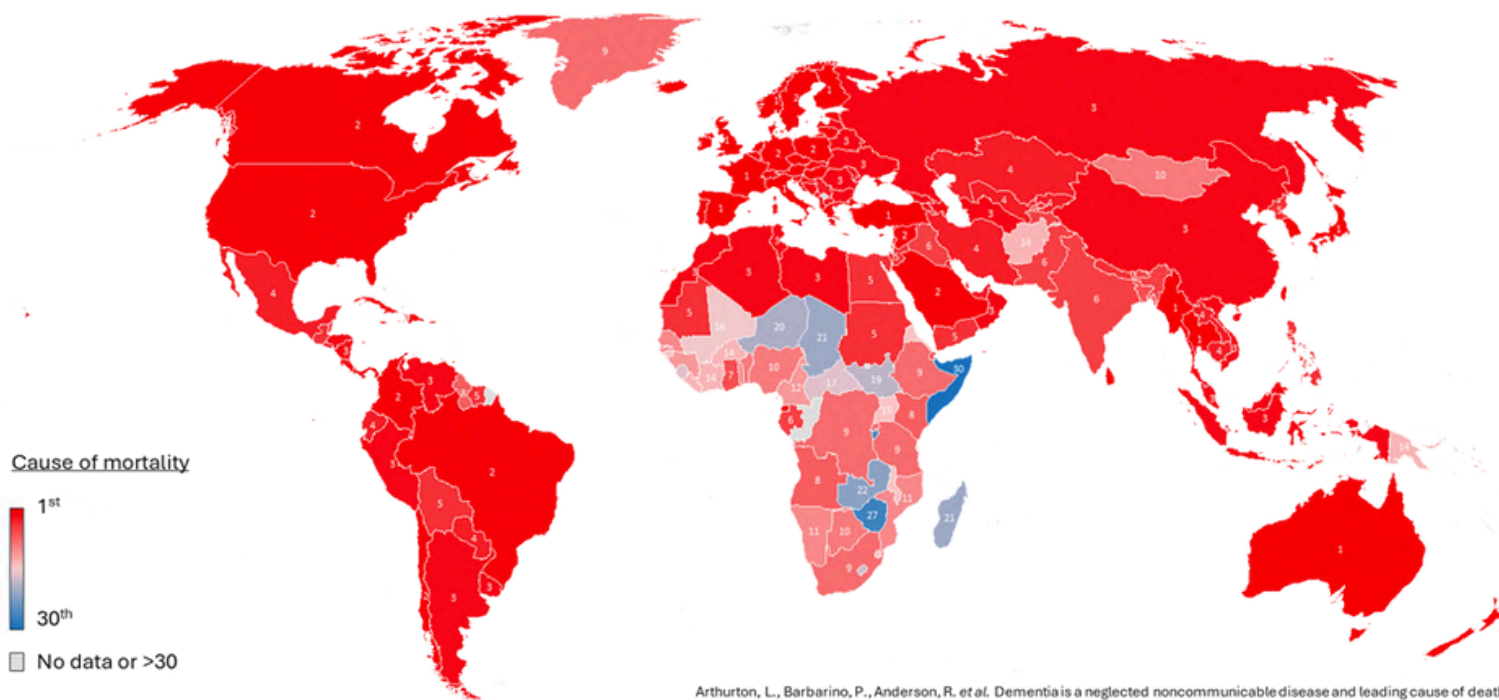


Dispelling myths



Dementia is a Leading NCD and Cause of Death

Dementia's burden underscores its status as a major NCD. At a national level, dementia is projected to be amongst the top 10 leading causes of death in 166 of 195 countries and territories, ranking in the top five causes of death in 121 countries. Globally, dementia is currently the 7th leading cause of death and is projected to become the 3rd leading cause by 2040. In 2020, dementia caused over 1.8 million deaths worldwide, surpassing many other NCDs in mortality impact.



Arthurton, L., Barbarino, P., Anderson, R. et al. Dementia is a neglected noncommunicable disease and leading cause of death. (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41582-024-01051-w>

READ MORE

In 2025, ADI published dementia mortality forecasts charted against 143 other diseases and conditions.

Globally dementia is set to be the 3rd leading cause of death by 2040 and will be within the top 10 in 166 countries.

[Read the paper](#)



Risk reduction

Dementia is not inevitable: research now demonstrates that dementia risk can be reduced through prevention efforts targeting modifiable factors across the life course. The Lancet Standing Commission on Dementia Prevention, Intervention and Care (2024), led by Professor Gill Livingston, identified 14 modifiable risk factors that contribute to nearly half of all dementia cases worldwide. These include lower levels of education, hearing loss, hypertension, obesity, smoking, physical inactivity, diabetes, depression, social isolation, excessive alcohol consumption, air pollution, traumatic brain injury, and, most recently, untreated vision loss and high LDL cholesterol.

Risk reduction is one of the most cost-effective actions Alzheimer's and dementia associations can advocate for. Interventions such as increasing access to hearing aids, promoting blood pressure checks in midlife, supporting smoking cessation, creating safe walking or cycling infrastructure, and encouraging social connection do not require specialised dementia services and can be delivered through existing primary healthcare and community programmes. Crucially, risk reduction benefits everyone: it helps delay or prevent dementia, adds more healthy years of life and reduces pressure on health and social care systems. For policymakers, investing in dementia risk reduction is a low-cost, high-impact opportunity that improves population brain health today and helps reduce future prevalence.



Template tools



Government letter template

Template letter your association can use to urge your government to better integrate dementia into NCD policies.

[Download](#)



Civil society letter

Template letter your association can use to propose collaboration with other NCD organisations.

[Download](#)



Presentation slide

Presentation slide on dementia as an NCD and the UN declaration on NCDs and mental health.

[Download](#)



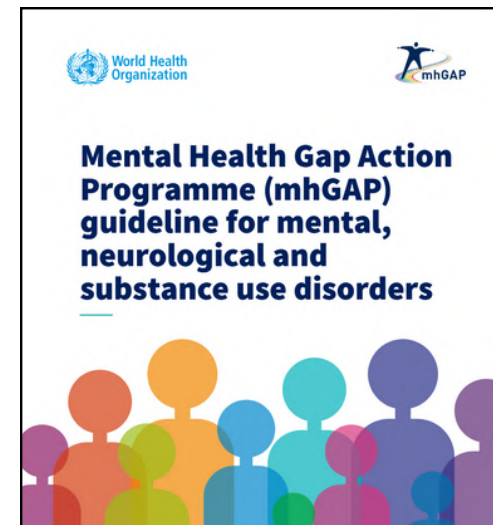
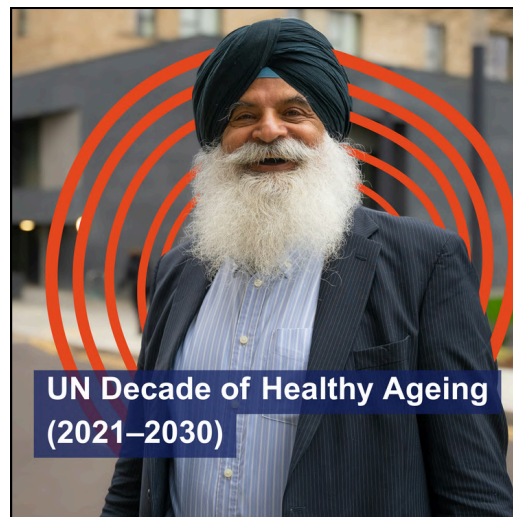
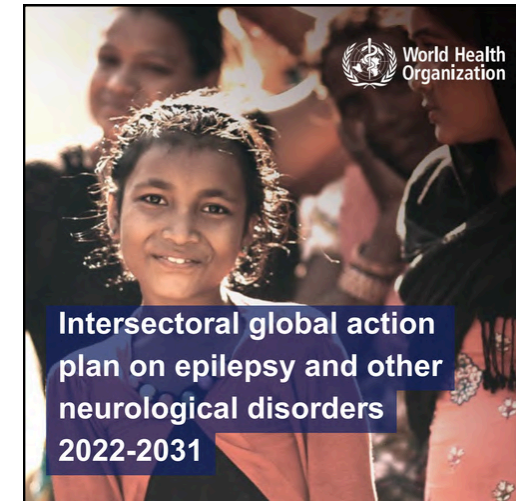
Press release

Press release focused on educating policymakers and the general public on dementia as an NCD.

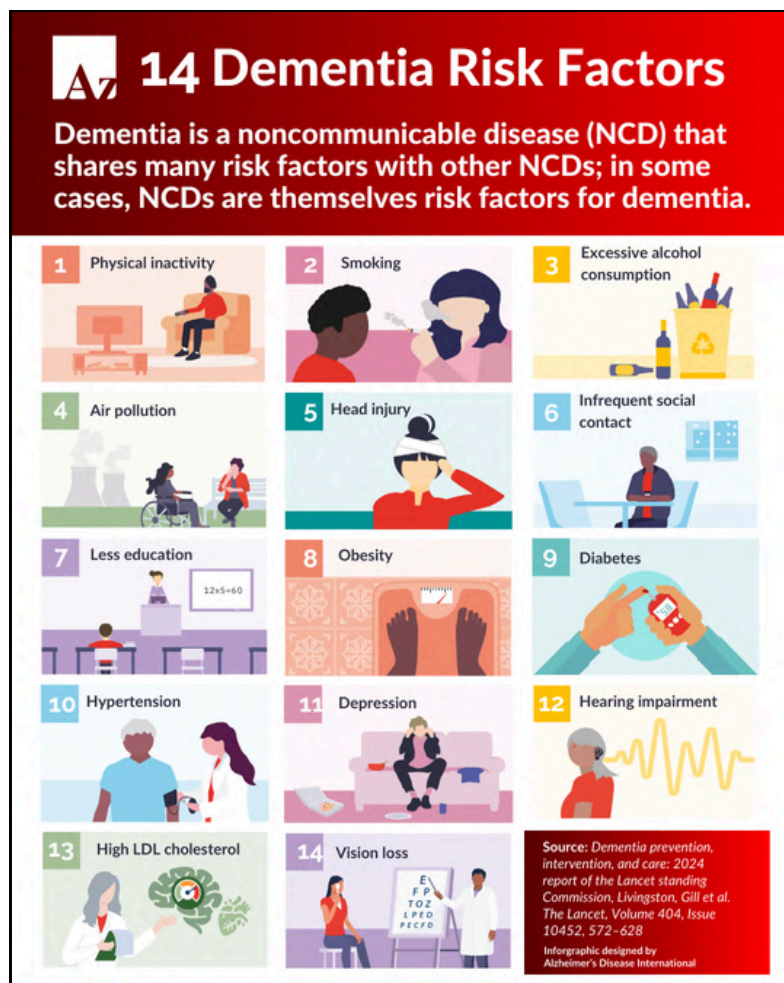
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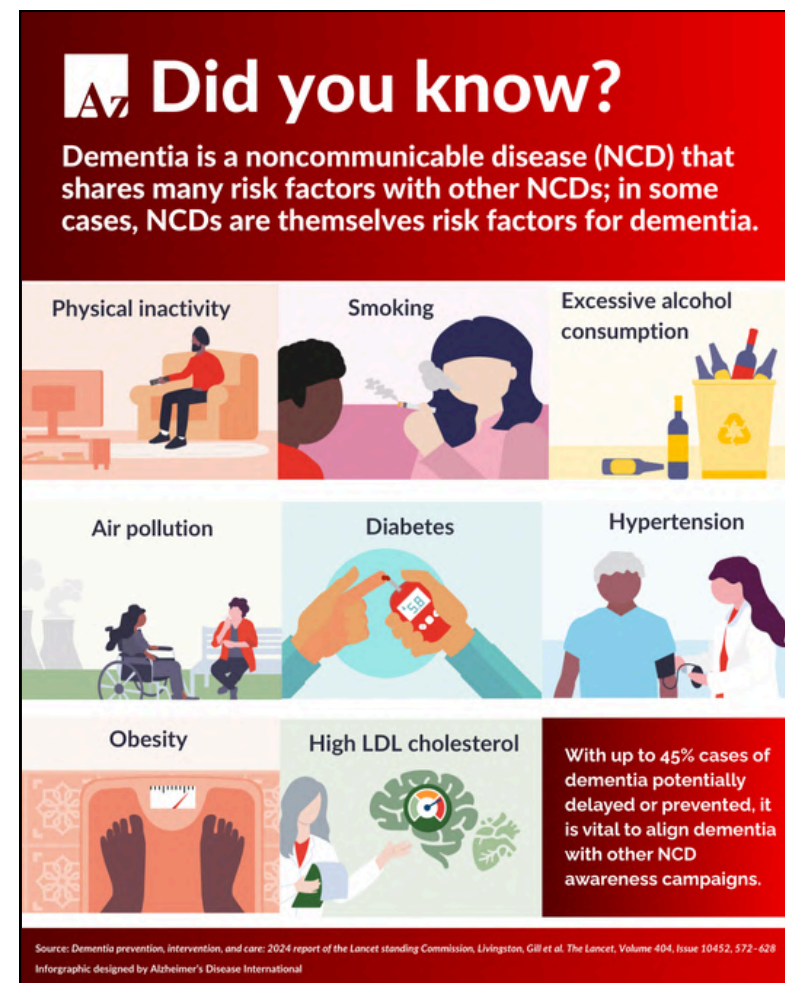
Multilateral tools available



Social media cards



14 Dementia risk factors card



Shared NCD risk factors card

Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) is the global federation of Alzheimer and dementia associations, established in 1984. With over 100 member associations across the world, ADI works to raise awareness, support people with dementia and their carers, and influence policy at national, regional, and global levels. Our vision is risk reduction, timely diagnosis, care, and inclusion today, and cure tomorrow.