



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Research can cut cost of alcohol-related dementia in half**

26 July 2010, Rugby - Swanswell, a national charity that helps people overcome drug, alcohol and other problem behaviour, has published its groundbreaking findings into an increasingly wide-spread condition known as alcohol-related brain injury (ARBI) or alcohol-related brain damage (ARBD).

Research shows that 12.5% of cases of dementia in people under 65 in the UK are alcohol-related (Harvey et al., 1998)<sup>1</sup> and that cases of ARBI are likely to continue to rise as alcohol consumption increases (Gupta, S., Warner, J., 2008)<sup>2</sup>

Having identified that cases of ARBI are increasing, Swanswell teamed up with Coventry University to carry out a major research project into the prevalence of ARBI and to develop cost-effective treatment methods to meet the needs of people with the condition, and their families and carers.

The cost to the UK economy of ARBI being undetected or misdiagnosed is staggering. The cost of dementia in the UK is estimated at £20 billion per year, and studies suggest that 10% of all cases of dementia are alcohol-related.<sup>3</sup> This leads to the conclusion that ARBI costs a massive £2 billion every year.

[MORE]

ARBI is often perceived as a degenerative and irreversible condition. However, research shows that if an appropriate diagnosis is made early and the right intervention is received, 25% of people can recover completely and a further 25% can recover enough to lead independent lives (Smith, I., Hillman, A., 1999)<sup>4</sup>

Based on these figures, Swanswell's ARBI interventions are expected to achieve positive outcomes for half of all people identified with ARBI, supporting them to achieve independent living and saving the UK economy an estimated £1 billion per year.

Published in *Advances in Dual Diagnosis*, Swanswell's paper entitled '*The Development of a Multi-Discipline Programme for the Treatment of Alcohol-Related Brain Injury*', addresses the lack of awareness of ARBI, the difficulty in correctly diagnosing the condition due to the wide range and varying severity of the symptoms, and the need to equip primary care staff to identify the signs of ARBI and make appropriate referrals to services that can support the patient.

Kevin, a Swanswell service user with symptoms of ARBI, said: '*At first I thought I was losing my mind but my memory's getting better. I remember more things and they're easier to remember. Swanswell has given me a fresh start and I'm enjoying life again*'.

Chris Robinson, Director of Services at Swanswell, said: '*We're incredibly proud of the huge strides Swanswell has made in understanding ARBI and the needs of those who have it. Research shows that if detected early, people with ARBI are more likely to show signs of improvement in their condition. That's why we're working to raise awareness and develop treatment methods that will help more people to improve their quality of life*'.

[MORE]

The publication of these findings comes ahead of Swanswell's innovative pilot, which they'll be starting in September 2010. The pilot will work with a group of service users who've been identified as showing symptoms of ARBI, helping to maximise rehabilitation and independent living, as well as training carers to deliver rehabilitative exercises for the person with ARBI.

Go to [www.pierprofessional.com](http://www.pierprofessional.com) to read the full article.

[ENDS]

### References

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2. Gupta, S., Warner, J., 2008. *Alcohol-related dementia: a 21st-century silent epidemic?* The British Journal of Psychiatry 193, 351–353
3. Smith, J.S., Kiloh, L.G., 1981. *The investigation of dementia: results in 200 consecutive admissions*. Lancet, 1: 824-7. cited on The British Journal of Psychiatry. 2008. *Alcohol-related dementia: a 21st-century silent epidemic?* [Online]. Available at: <http://bjp.rcpsych.org/cgi/content/full/193/5/351#REF18> [Accessed 21 July 2010]
4. Smith, I., Hillman, A., 1999. *Management of alcohol Korsakoff Syndrome*. Advances in Psychiatric Treatment, vol. 5, pp. 271-278

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### About Swanswell

Swanswell is a national charity that helps people overcome drug, alcohol and other problem behaviour. We believe that everyone deserves the chance to change and to be happy. We help them to remove the things that stand in their way, whether physical,

emotional or practical. So, as their lives improve, they can feel well, do well, and stay well. Swanswell has a reputation for innovation and is a leading developer of new services which help people to change their lives for the better.

[www.swanswell.org](http://www.swanswell.org)

### *About **Advances in Dual Diagnosis***

*Advances in Dual Diagnosis* is a journal for frontline workers, practitioners, managers and researchers. It's rooted in the experience of dual diagnosis in practice, with user and carer's experiences central to the tone and themes covered. It supports frontline workers in the delivery of evidence-based practice and provides a forum for the debate of current issues and opinions.