

## **SCRIPT ONE**

**Intro:** This is part one of a three series program which will cover information about dementia. The final session will allow for a talk back session where by listeners can ring in and ask questions about dementia to a general practitioner.

### **WIFE GOES TO DOCTOR BECAUSE OF HER GROWING CONCERN OVER HER HUSBAND'S UNUSUAL BEHAVIOUR.**

**WIFE:** *Doctor I'm worried about my husband. Over the past eight months he is not himself. He's doing and saying some unusual things.*

**DOCTOR:** *Can you tell me what kind of unusual things?*

**WIFE:** *Well, for one thing he doesn't seem to remember things. He can remember what he did when he was young but he sometimes doesn't remember if he ate breakfast. My sons have told me that he's also making mistakes when he's driving and sometimes he gets confused with directions or forgets his way home. But the other day something happened that made me very worried. We had friends visiting and my husband kept repeating the same things over and over again and then he would forget what he was saying and the conversation would suddenly stop. It was very embarrassing and I had to apologise to our friends. I'm sure they think my husband's losing his mind. When I tell him what he's doing he gets angry with me. I don't know what's wrong with him*

**DOCTOR:** *From what you have described, your husband may have some issues with his memory, it may be dementia.*

**WIFE:** *I have heard of dementia but I thought only very old people get it.*

**DOCTOR:** *Dementia is not a natural part of ageing and it is not mental illness. Dementia is a physical illness that is caused by damage to the brain. The reason for the changes in your husband's behaviour could be caused by the changes that are happening in his brain. There are several forms of dementia the most common forms are Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia. The symptoms of dementia may include memory loss especially remembering recent events, mood changes, people may feel sad, frightened or angry about what is happening to them and communication problems having difficulty finding the right words or slowly losing the ability to talk, read and write. But dementia affects each person differently and it's important to get a diagnosis as early as possible.*

**WIFE:** *What should I do?*

**DOCTOR:** *Your husband should come and see me as soon as possible. When he comes, I will start by talking with you and your husband to get a better*

*picture of what has been happening to him. I will then give your husband a full physical examination and get him to have a blood test. I want to rule out or identify other possible medical conditions like depression, stress or infection, which can also create similar symptoms in the early stages. I'll test his memory by asking a few simple questions and I will also test to see how well he can follow instructions by giving him a task to complete. Then, if necessary, I would refer your husband to a specialist who will do other tests and maybe run a brain scan to identify if any changes are happening in his brain. The specialist will be able to give us a definite diagnosis of what is happening to your husband.*

*WIFE: Thank you doctor. It's helped to talk to a professional about this - I've had an awful feeling about this. I'll organise an appointment for my husband right away.*

**If you are worried about the behavior of someone you know, ring the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500 delivered by Alzheimer's Australia. An interpreter service is available to assist. Speaking to someone who knows about memory loss can be really helpful.**

**This is a Dementia Community Support Grant Program funded through the Australian Government's Department of Health and Ageing and developed by the Australian Multicultural Foundation.**

## SCRIPT TWO

**Intro:** This is part two of a three series program which will cover information about dementia. The final session will allow for a talk back session where by listeners can ring in and ask questions about dementia to a general practitioner.

### **HUSBAND AND WIFE (Mr. & Mrs. XXX) ARE AT THE DOCTOR'S SURGERY TO DISCUSS HUSBAND'S SYMPTOMS AND DIAGNOSIS.**

**DOCTOR:** *Good to see you Mr and Mrs XXX. Mr. XXX your wife has been worried about you lately, can you tell me how you've been feeling over the past few months?*

**HUSBAND:** *I feel fine. My wife thinks there's something wrong with me just because I forget things every now and then. I know sometimes I get a little confused when I'm driving but that's probably just my age. I am 72 after all. I think my family is overreacting.*

**DOCTOR:** *Tell me about this feeling of confusion you have when you're driving. When did it start?*

**HUSBAND:** *I don't know exactly, maybe five, six months ago. It's nothing really, sometimes I just forget where I am and I need a bit of time to remember whether I should turn right or left. I'm probably not paying attention to where I'm going.*

**DOCTOR:** *Has this been happening every time you drive?*

**HUSBAND:** *Not every time but it is happening more often lately. It does scare me a little because it makes me feel silly.*

**DOCTOR:** *Tell me about some of the other things you have difficulty remembering.*

**HUSBAND:** *Well, to tell you the truth, I've noticed that I'll forget our friends' names and sometimes I can't even remember the name of everyday objects like spoon or comb. It's like it's on the tip of my tongue...I get angry when the word doesn't come into my head; it's very frustrating especially when I'm talking to friends. My wife keeps reminding me but it doesn't seem to stay in my head. I often wondered if I was losing my mind.*

**WIFE:** *And he keeps repeating the same things over and over again. The boys sometimes lose their patience with him and tell him to be quiet. That makes him very upset and he won't talk to anyone for hours.*

**DOCTOR:** *Mr. XXX it seems to me you are aware that you have difficulties with your memory and you are also feeling anxious, depressed and angry about your forgetfulness. I think we need to deal with this issue right away and I'd like to send you to a specialist who will do some tests to assess your memory. He may also want to do a brain scan so we can get a better picture of what is happening in your brain. But firstly, I want to give you a full physical examination and a blood test. The sooner we find out what is going on, the earlier you can get the right help, treatment and support.*

**HUSBAND:** *My wife said you think I have dementia?*

**DOCTOR:** *We need to do these tests first to make sure that we make the right diagnosis*

**HUSBAND:** *Thank you doctor. Even though I'm not quite sure what is going on in my head at least I know that I have taken the first step and it's a relief to talk about it.*

**DOCTOR:** *Mr. XXX try not to feel guilty or silly about what is happening to you. This is not in your control. And don't think it's your fault or that you've done anything wrong. And certainly you are not losing your mind.*

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## **SCRIPT THREE**

**Intro:** This is the final program of a three series which will cover information about dementia. The final session will allow for a talk back session where by listeners can ring in and ask questions about dementia to a general practitioner.

### **MR. & MRS. XXX DISCUSS THEIR LIVES AFTER RECEIVING MR. XXX'S DIAGNOSIS OF DEMENTIA.**

**WIFE:** *My sons felt their father was always angry. He was forgetting things a lot, making mistakes with driving and saying strange things to our friends. We should have taken him to see a doctor a lot earlier. I just thought he was getting old and was totally unaware of dementia. I think people need to be much more aware of the symptoms.*

**HUSBAND:** *I knew that something wasn't right with me but I didn't know what. I thought I was losing my mind. When my wife told me to go to the doctor, I said no. I guess at some level, I was scared of what he might find. But my sons and wife persisted and I finally gave in.*

**WIFE:** *When the doctor told my husband he had dementia he was upset. It was a terrible shock for him. And it was a shock for all of us. But there was also a sense of relief. Finally we could make sense of his behaviour. All the stress and wondering what was wrong suddenly went away. We had a diagnosis and now we could do something about it.*

**HUSBAND:** *The doctor gave us some good advice. He told me about different types of treatment and put us in touch with Alzheimer's Australia. They came over and talked to us about many different things. They even brought an interpreter, which made it a lot easier for my wife and me. I remember we asked many questions that day. They were very helpful.*

**WIFE:** *The support we have received from everyone, family, friends and Alzheimer's Australia has been wonderful. I have been telling my family and friends about dementia. I think people don't understand this disease and there needs to be more awareness and information.*

**HUSBAND:** *It hasn't been easy for me to accept that I have dementia but slowly, with the help of family and friends I am learning how to live with it. I make sure that my lifestyle is healthy, I try to exercise more, I've stopped smoking and I've started reading again. I don't feel silly any more if I forget someone's name or if I can't find the right word. My wife and children are more understanding. We know that this disease isn't something I can control.*

***WIFE: Sometimes it can be very hard and sad seeing my husband this way. But support is the key that helps both of us cope with daily life. The support from my family, friends and Alzheimer's Australia means that sometimes I can go out with my friends and know my husband is safe. Other times they come over and take him out and this gives me a little bit of time to do the things I need to do. Everyone says that because I am the carer I need to make sure that I am healthy and well too. I know how important it is to take a break, even just to go for a short walk or have a good laugh with a friend. Talking to someone is also very helpful. I feel I can cope better, I know I'm not alone.***

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