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Smell Clinic commences in Australia as researchers gather more data on Alzheimer's disease

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To recruit about 50 people from different population groups including those with early stages of mild cognitive impairment or diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease



A pilot smell clinic has commenced at Australia-based Griffith University's Gold Coast campus in a bid to gather more data on how microorganisms within the nose can contribute to Alzheimer's disease.

Professor James St John from Griffith's Clem Jones Centre for Neurobiology and Stem Cell Research said the ultimate aim of the pilot is to find out if the sense of smell can be used as an early warning indicator of Alzheimer's disease.

"If we can detect early indications of the risk of Alzheimer's disease five to ten years before the onset of cognitive impairment, then we can administer treatments much earlier and hopefully reduce the progression of the disease," Professor St John said.

Dr Ali Delbaz, a Research Fellow who is managing the smell clinic, said, "We already know almost all people with Alzheimer's disease have lost at least some of their sensitivity in the sense of smell, but testing the sense of smell is not routinely used in diagnosis. Our new data now suggests we can detect decline in the sense of smell much earlier than previously thought so we have a great opportunity of creating an easy screening method."

The researchers will conduct a range of tests including some very interesting and fun smell tests, as well as taking a small biopsy from inside the nose which will then be analysed for the presence of various microorganisms and changes in protein and gene expression.