



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Cancer survivors with 'chemo brain' can improve their game online**

Cancer survivors experiencing problems with their memory and concentration following chemotherapy treatment can help overcome symptoms using simple online brain training exercises, a conference of cancer experts in Hobart will be told today (17/11).

Researchers found that doing 40 minutes of online brain training exercises four times a week for 15 weeks resulted in a significant improvement in cancer survivors' cognitive symptoms, as well as decreasing their symptoms of anxiety and depression, reducing stress and fatigue and improving their quality of life. Six months later, cancer survivors continued to experience the majority of these benefits.

Dr Victoria Bray and colleagues, who undertook the research at the University of Sydney, will tell the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia's Annual Scientific Meeting that whilst there has been increasing awareness from both health professionals and patients' of the impact of cancer and chemotherapy on cognitive function, up until now, little has been known about what can be done to treat these important symptoms.

"There is an increase in the general awareness of the negative impact that cancer and cancer treatments can have on an individual's ability to think clearly," Dr Bray said. "However, up until now, very little has been known about what can be done to help these people."

Dr Bray said "The results of this study are encouraging and pleasing to see that the skills that participants worked on in front of the screen appear to have translated into improvements in cognitive symptoms and impact on mood and quality of life. This study has the potential to provide a new home based treatment option for cancer survivors with cognitive symptoms, whereas previously none existed."

Clinical Oncology Society of Australia President, Professor Mei Krishnasamy, said the research was significant in being the first large randomised control trial showing a simple, low cost method of treating chemo-related memory and concentration problems in cancer survivors .

"This research is the first it's kind to show promise in treating these side-effects of treatment where other trials, including drugs and medication, have failed," Professor Krishnasamy said.

"As cancer survival rates increase, we are seeing far more Australians living beyond their cancer diagnosis. But the impact of cancer and its treatment doesn't stop there.

"Knowing that simple and readily available online brain training exercises can help them overcome these challenges will be very empowering for those for who have survived cancer, as well as for health professionals looking for advice they can give their patients."

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#### **Notes to Editors:**

**"Evaluation of a web based cognitive rehabilitation programme (CRP) in cancer survivors reporting cognitive symptoms following chemotherapy" will be presented at the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia ASM in Hobart on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2015.**