For every year we live, we gain three months' life expectancy. At present, there are no signs that the trend towards greater longevity will be reversed in the near future. And given the dwindling birth rates, the average age of the German population is set to rise significantly in the coming years. Dementia is associated with ageing and its frequency doubles every five years from the age of 65. The growing number of older people in Germany will lead to a dramatic upsurge in people suffering from dementia. Thus, in the next few years, an answer must be found as to how those regions of Germany most affected by demographic ageing can provide adequate medical, social and long-term care for elderly dementia patients. When it comes to the consequences of demographic ageing for Germany's healthcare system, the State of Mecklenburg West-Pomerania is an excellent example in that it is years:

- A rapidly ageing population
- High mobility within the working population, with an associated large number of functional single-person households
- A dwindling number of general practitioners and medical specialists
- Long healthcare-related journeys in a sparsely populated region

At its site Rostock/Greifswald the DZNE works closely with the universities and university hospitals. It is intended to use Mecklenburg West-Pomerania as a model region to study the effects of demographic change, identify dementia-related medical and long-term care needs, develop and implement new care provision networks and monitor their effectiveness. The aim of a care provision network is to improve the current situation for Mecklenburg West-Pomerania's elderly dementia patients and their families, and to use the knowledge gained to develop solutions to tackle the demographic problems that other regions in Germany will face later down the line.

The DZNE Rockstock/Greifswald
Identify the need for care and medical support along with the medical, social, family and care resources that are currently available. This information will be gathered as part of a population-based survey conducted in Mecklenburg West-Pomerania and using an existing epidemiological infrastructure which has already been used to study broad sections of the population on health-related issues.

Establish a regional subsidiary care network. The aim of this network is to identify available resources and to optimise their coordination based on knowledge of actual needs in the region. In line with the subsidiary approach, new elements such as the services of an outpatient care manager will be integrated into the network if care needs cannot be met sufficiently at regional level.

As part of the planned population-based survey, the effectiveness of the subsidiary dementia care network will be examined for clinical factors and socio-demographic and socio-economic factors when compared with the existing dementia healthcare structure.

In the real-life situation of a population-based survey, the DZNE Rostock/Greifswald offers the opportunity to evaluate new diagnostic and treatment approaches in practice for their practicability and clinical benefits. This includes image-producing diagnostic markers, basic research on pharmacological therapies and the use of diagnostic markers and therapeutic approaches are current selected clinical collectives. As yet, however, there is no information as to how new diagnostic and treatment approaches affect people’s quality of life and care in a broad population.

In sum, when it comes to DZNE’s research efforts, the DZNE Rostock/Greifswald forms a bridge into real-life situations in society. Its aim is to establish a platform on which to quickly evaluate new diagnosis and treatment procedures developed for their clinical importance and relevance in providing dementia care to the German population, and to accelerate the provision of purposeful diagnostic and therapeutic measures to the broad population. The DZNE Rostock/Greifswald can already contribute to improving the situation for Mecklenburg West-Pomerania’s elderly dementia patients and their families, and is able to glean knowledge which can be of use to other parts of Germany likely to face demographic problems in the near to middle future.