

# Healthcare research, globe-spanning: comparison of dementia and crisis management in Chile, New Zealand and Germany.

DZNE researchers from the Witten site have traveled to the far corners of the world to learn how indigenous cultures care for people with dementia against the backdrop of Covid-19. Site spokesperson Prof. Martina Roes and Dr. Franziska Laporte Uribe, a PostDoc (project leader) visited New Zealand for two weeks in March 2023 as part of the DFG-funded COVIDemX3 initiative. With colleagues and practice partners from Chile and New Zealand, they explored possibilities for collaboration in a future three-country project on dementia and on crises. Their findings can also be transferred to local care models.



The project team in Chile (from left to right): Alejandra Fuentes-García, Martina Roes, Barbara Leviqueo Raiman, Marama Muru-Lanning, Ngaire Kerse, Andrea Slachevsky, Franziska Laporte Uribe, Oscar Arteaga.



Visiting the German Ambassador to New Zealand: from left to right Barbara Leviqueo Raiman, Oscar Arteaga, Ambassador Nicole Menzenbach, Franziska Laporte Uribe, Ngaire Kerse, Andrea Slachevsky, Alejandra Fuentes-García

### **Crises as a culmination point**

Among the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic are the unexpectedly deep insights that suddenly opened up into the workings of national and international healthcare systems, and the enormously steep learning curve of individual systems: On the one hand, gaps in medical care were relentlessly uncovered worldwide, but on the other hand, many innovations in care and research were advanced.

People with dementia are among the most vulnerable groups, especially in emergency situations such as a pandemic. From aspects of care research, and against the background of this unique challenge, it is therefore particularly interesting to see what strengths diverse, globally quite different groups/communities show in dealing with crises, and whether there are commonalities that could have broader relevance.

How this looks concretely on the ground and also far away from European practice is what the COVIDemX3 initiative is investigating. In particular, it is about the translation of found innovations into the care of people with dementia, and about opportunities to learn from each other: what is needed to contribute to appropriate and equitable care for people with dementia,

e.g. in families and in New Zealand so-called "whānau"? And what builds resilience in the communities and health systems concerned in times of crisis and beyond?

The research project is interdisciplinary and translational: it links disaster management approaches with dementia research and public health approaches with health services research in the context of dementia. And it pays attention to including the voices of populations that are often underrepresented in dementia research - including, for example, people affected by dementia with a migrant background or from indigenous populations, such as Māori or Mapuche. Despite the differences in disciplinary references, there is a common goal: to improve the care of people with dementia and related research.

### **Interdisciplinary field research with fieldwork in Chile ...**

The initial DFG funding (grant number: LA 4943/1-1, period: 01/2022-10/2023) supported the establishment of an international research network. Thus, from the original idea - linking perspectives from disaster research and dementia research - a network of experts from different disciplines and professional backgrounds emerged, who met in Chile in June 2022 for a first collaborative workshop. They were invited by internationally renowned dementia expert Prof. Andrea Slachevsky (Neurologist, GERO, Memory and Neuropsychiatric Clinic Hospital del Salvador and Faculty of Medicine, University of Chile). The New Zealand professors Ngaire Kerse (Joyce Cook Chair of Ageing Well at the Population Health Centre at the University of Auckland) and Marama Muru-Lanning (Director James-Henare Research Centre), as well as Prof. Lothar Schrott (international disaster specialist at the University of Bonn) and Franziska Laporte Uribe had the opportunity to visit the Hospital Intercultural Kallvu Llanka, the Cefam Cristo Vive Community Health Centre and the Kintun Day Centre in Peñaloén.

These direct exchanges and on-site meetings helped to improve the researchers' understanding of the needs of underrepresented populations and solidify the basis for further collaboration.

### **... and in New Zealand**

Prof. Ngaire Kerse and Dr. Matthew Croucher (Old Age Psychiatrist, University of Otago in Christchurch) hosted the 2nd workshop in New Zealand from March 25 to April 08, 2023. In addition to the representatives of the DZNE site Witten and Prof. Slachevsky, also present from Chile were Prof. Oscar Arteaga (Public Health Specialist), Assist. Prof. Alejandra Fuentes-García (Sociologist) and Ms. Leviqueo Raiman (Nurse and Health Care Advisor) were invited from Chile. From New Zealand, Emeritus Prof. Ray Kirk (Health Sciences and HTA Specialist) and Assoc. Prof. Gary Cheung (Medical and Clinical Psychiatrist) were also invited to the network meetings. Particularly valuable was the exchange with Ms Leviqueo Raiman, who comes from a rural region in the south of Chile (Cañete) and is Mapuche herself.

The focus for this 2nd trilateral workshop was on deepening the collaboration - and discussing a follow-up application. This involved, for example, questions about identity and dementia and similarities and differences from the perspective of indigenous people. In addition to the academic meetings, there was also an intensive exchange with various stakeholders from the field, such as the team from a care facility in Auckland, who reported on their understanding of person-centered care and their experiences in dealing with the floods of January this year. A visit to New Zealand's first dementia-friendly hospital in Christchurch also made it clear that care for people with dementia in this country is not thought of in isolation from the

country's cultural diversity or its natural hazards, such as the devastating earthquake of February 22, 2012.

The hosts were particularly proud of the BrainTree Wellness Centre for Brain Health, an alliance of various community partners in a community center now newly opened in Christchurch after the 2012 earthquake. In Wellington, the focus was on exchanges with representatives of national dementia NGOs - Alzheimers New Zealand and Age Concern. A special highlight here was the visit with Ambassador Nicole Menzenbach at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The past few months have seen great efforts by all collaborating partners to create opportunities for substantial scientific collaboration. The consortium is convinced that this collaboration will be of great benefit to all three countries, and early involvement of practice partners and stakeholders is critical to achieving this.

A collaboration of clinicians, public health and disaster management researchers, and people like Ms. Leviqueo Raiman, who offers insights from her unique indigenous perspective, is a foundation for transformation and innovation. It will help make care for people with dementia and their families, as well as related research, more appropriate for and responsive to the needs of a diverse population.

### **Publications:**

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Laporte Uribe, F., Arteaga, O., Cheung, G., Croucher, M., Fuentes-García, A., Kerse, N., Leviqueo Raiman, B., Kirk, R., Muru-Lanning, M., Schrott, L., Slachevsky, A., Vergara, R., & Roes, M. (2023). POS2-44 Diversifying our understanding of, and responding to, dementia care and crises: First insights from Aotearoa New Zealand, Chile, and Germany. Poster presented at the Alzheimer Europe 33rd Annual Conference, Helsinki.

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