

By **Jenny Hope**
Medical Correspondent

JUST 8p in every £10 spent looking after dementia patients goes on research into the causes, shocking figures reveal.

The outlay on stroke research is little better, with 19p allocated from each £10 spent on the health and social needs of patients.

A study says the amount spent by the Government and charities studying dementia and strokes is 'still way too low'. Despite extra cash pumped into the two diseases recently by government bodies, they remain underfunded given the economic and personal impact felt by millions of sufferers and their families, say researchers.

In comparison to cancer and coronary heart disease they are still poor relations, according to calculations by Oxford University academics.

The amount spent on cancer research is around 13 times higher than dementia, and almost six times more than stroke.

The spend on heart disease is eight times that of dementia and triple the amount spent on stroke research, says the study published in the online journal *BMJ Open*. Researchers assessed

'Over half of all deaths'

central government and charity research expenditure in 2012 into the UK's leading causes of death and disability - cancer, coronary heart disease, dementia and stroke which together accounted for over half of all deaths.

The combined amount of research funding allocated by the Government and charities to the four conditions came to £856million in 2012, almost two-thirds of which was allocated to cancer.

Around one-fifth was devoted to coronary heart disease, while just 11 per cent was allocated to dementia and 7 per cent to stroke research.

The study found a significant shift in funding since 2008, particularly after a commitment by the Coalition to new money for dementia research.

But the sums allocated by charities have scarcely budged since 2008, possibly because they rely on public donations which may be affected by 'a form of ageism' where dementia and stroke are seen as inevitable only in the elderly.

Research leader Professor Alastair Gray, of the Health Economic Research Centre at the Nuffield Department of Population Health, Oxford University, said overall research funding has not been cut but priorities had shifted.

Overall research spending by government bodies went up 20 per cent over the period, but there was a change in diseases that benefited. In 2012, £157million was

spent on cancer research by government bodies, down from £267million in 2008. Prof Gray said: 'There was increasing recognition that expenditure on dementia should rise and this was reflected in the Coalition agreement.

'As a consequence less was spent on cancer because of the increasing emphasis on dementia and stroke, but these areas remain underfunded when compared with the burden of disease.'

He said research funding was 'still way too low' in both diseases, especially for stroke. There are at least 800,000 dementia patients and

1.2million stroke victims needing health and social care each year in the UK, compared with 2.3million cases of cancer and the same number of heart disease cases.

Costs of healthcare were highest for cancer at £4.4billion and lowest for dementia at £1.4billion and stroke at £1.8billion. But social care costs of dementia outweighed social care costs of the other three conditions combined.

Health and social care for dementia cost £11.6billion in 2012 - more than double the equivalent bill for cancer. This means that for every £10 of health and

social care costs attributable to each condition, £1.08 in research funding was spent on cancer, 65p on coronary heart disease, 19p on stroke, and just 8p on dementia, the researchers calculated.

Hilary Evans, of Alzheimer's Research UK, said the charity has more than doubled its annual commitment to research since 2008. She added: 'It will be vital for the next government to make dementia research a priority if we are to defeat the condition.'

Dr Doug Brown, of Alzheimer's Society, said: 'Alzheimer's Society has pledged to spend at least £100million on dementia research over the next decade - more than ever before - but if we're going to improve the quality of care, develop better treatments and ultimately cure dementia we need politicians to pledge continued commitment and set out an ambition to create a step change in research funding.'

Dr Dale Webb, of the Stroke Association, said that if the 'wholly inadequate' level of research funding into stroke remains the same, 'we will not be ready for the challenges a growing and ageing population will bring'.

Dementia research disgrace

Just 8p of every £10 spent on the disease goes towards finding cure

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

Figures show research funding per £10 of spending on health and social care (* denotes rounded figures)

	Cancer	Heart disease	Stroke	Dementia
Government	31p	29p	15p	6p
Charities	77p	36p	5p	1p
TOTAL	£1.08	65p	19p*	8p*