

Advancing olfactory research in ageing and dementia: Building an interdisciplinary network for innovation and risk reduction

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Background & Aim

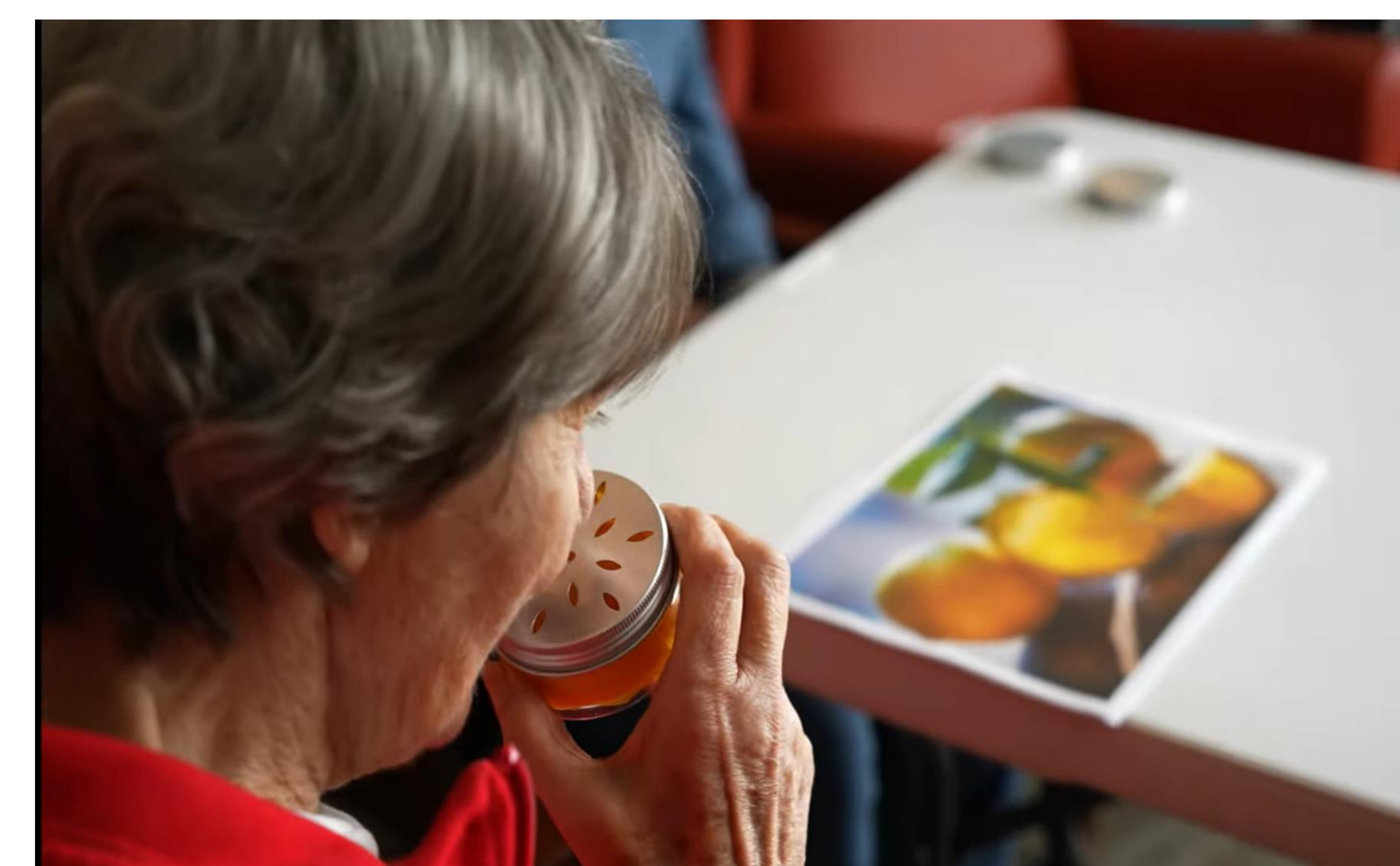
Ageing is associated with a significant loss of the sense of smell, olfaction. Around 50% of people aged 65 and above, and more than 80% of those over the age of 80 experience smell loss.

Previous studies have linked smell loss to greater risk of cognitive decline, dementia, depression, low quality of life, poor appetite, malnutrition and a shorter life span, yet remains under-researched, largely undiagnosed and untreated in older people.

Due to the regenerative capacity of the olfactory pathway, interventions such as smell training may help mitigate age-related olfactory decline and support healthy ageing.

The study aims to advance research and innovation by:

- Establishing an interdisciplinary network with experts in olfaction, ageing and dementia, including people with lived experience, communities, healthcare professionals, charities, industries, and scientific community.
- Identifying and reaching a consensus on uncertainties, gaps and priorities to drive this field forward.
- Formulating objectives for future collaborative projects and funding bids.



Methods

Study design: Five iterative online workshops and one survey will be conducted. The steps are informed by the virtual Nominal Group Technique (Figure 1).

Three groups will be involved:

Lived Expert: people with dementia, unpaid carers, people with olfactory dysfunction, communities

Professional Expert: healthcare professionals, charities, industries, researcher

Steering Committee: Three representatives from Lived Expert and Professional Expert groups will help guide the project.

Interested to join the network?

Register here for more information!

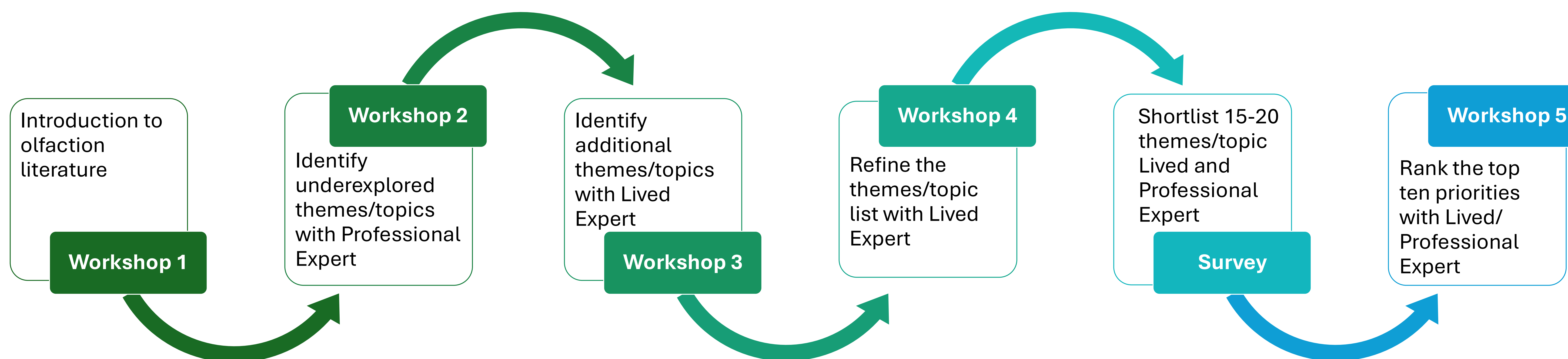
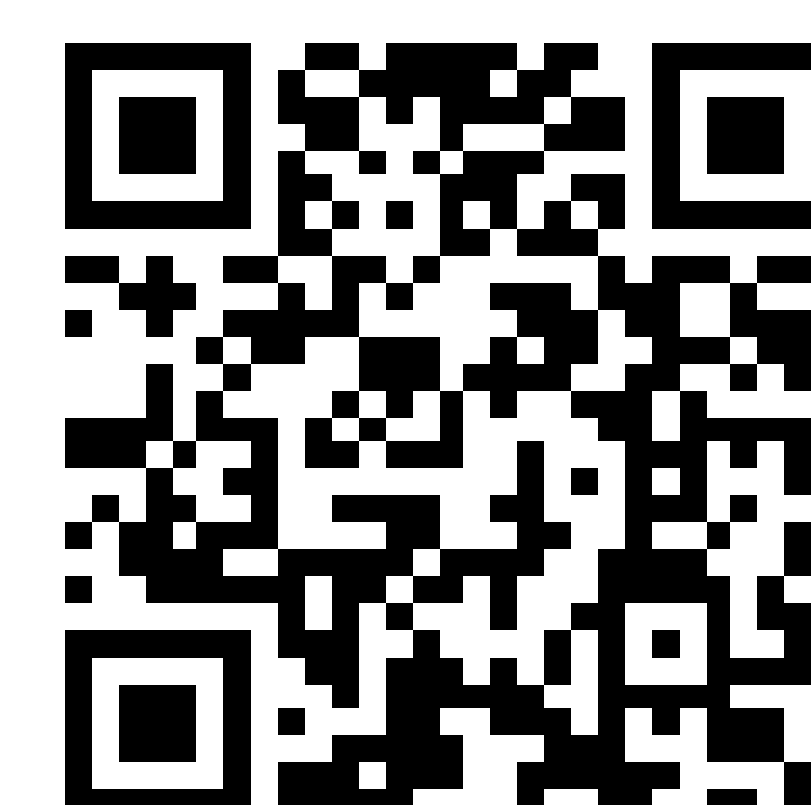


Figure 1. Steps adapted from the virtual Nominal Group Technique

Conclusion and next steps

The study contributes to advance knowledge on the role of olfaction in ageing, and cognitive decline, and ensure that olfactory health is integrated into dementia prevention efforts, ultimately contributing to risk reduction, healthy ageing and improved quality of life for older people.