RIA Welcomes a Global Force in Dementia Innovation

Written by Kristian Partington

The Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging (RIA) is thrilled to welcome Dr. Allen Power to the team. His innovative thinking has inspired people around the world and is already changing the way we support our oldest citizens.

Dr. Power is a geriatrician, skilled educator and published author, with two highly successful books, Dementia Beyond Drugs: Changing the Culture of Care and Dementia Beyond Disease: Enhancing Well-Being. He’s also a connector, bringing like-minded pioneers together from all corners of the globe to inspire change. He advocates for a collaborative, more holistic approach to the support of older adults, especially those living with the changing realities of dementia.

It is these and many other qualities that Dr. Power brings to his new position with RIA as Schlegel Chair in Aging and Dementia Innovation, where he’ll work alongside a yet-to-be-determined academic researcher in a complementary capacity.

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The Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging aims to enhance the quality of life and care of older adults through partnerships in research, education and practice. Innovations are developed and tested in the Schlegel Villages, and then shared to benefit older adults everywhere.
“Dr. Power is recognized around the world for his expertise and advocacy efforts to change the way we think about aging and those living with cognitive challenges,” says Josie d’Avernas, Executive Director at the RIA. “He will be an asset to the RIA as we continue to innovate and challenge current practices to ensure better quality of life for all older adults.”

In partnership with fellow RIA researchers and Schlegel Villages, Dr. Power will focus much of his energy on the enhancement of dementia support strategies, both in independent living and within long-term care and retirement settings. Transforming this knowledge into practical application in all settings will be a major priority, Dr. Power says.

In some ways, he imagines he’ll be “a sounding board when people propose research studies to offer input, not as a research expert but as somebody who knows enough about the practical applications to know what is useful or what questions need to be asked.”

The collaborative approach to research at RIA is a major attraction to his new position, Dr. Power says. He also intends to maintain his busy international speaking schedule, connecting with more people around the world whose efforts complement those of his fellow RIA team members and their partners in communities like Schlegel Villages.

“What’s most exciting to me is to have a forward-thinking organization that is already engaged in great care, culture change and transformation,” Dr. Power says, referring to the RIA partnership with Schlegel Villages. “I’ve worked with other organizations like that but I’ve never worked with one that actually has a formal partnership with a research entity.”

So many places around the world are doing great work but when others try to apply those efforts elsewhere, people always ask for proof of efficacy. “Where’s the data?” is a question Dr. Power hears often, and rarely is there any to offer.

“Here you have an entity that not only has people doing great things but has great researchers who can actually generate the evidence-based knowledge to back up those stories of success,” he says.