



## Bridge and its benefits to Society

### ***Bridge and Older People***

It has been proven that undertaking some form of activity that tests mental agility on a daily basis helps to protect our older population from dementia and Alzheimer's. There is also a body of research which demonstrates that social interaction amongst the elderly can stave off cognitive decline.

Accessible through Annals of Internal Medicine, American College of Physicians  
<http://www.annals.org/cgi/content/abstract/131/3/165>

Bridge provides both mental stimulation and social engagement.

The UK's Alzheimer's Research Trust states the following:

*163,000 new cases of dementia occur in England and Wales each year - one every 3.2 minutes.*

*Each year 39,400 more people are diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in England and Wales. That equates to one new case every 14 minutes.*

*The number of people with cognitive impairment, which is most commonly caused by dementia, is expected to increase by 66 percent between 1998 and 2031 to 765,000 individuals.*

*According to the Dementia UK report from King's College London and the London School of Economics (commissioned by the Alzheimer's Society) dementia currently costs the UK over £17billion per year.*

*Dementia costs in the UK will reach almost £35 billion within 20 years according to the King's Fund's 2008 report 'Paying the Price'.*

Source: <http://www.alzheimers-research.org.uk/info/statistics/>

Although we know that Bridge is not a cure for dementia we do have evidence from research that it can help keep the brain healthy:

*"A Nov. 2000 study by a University of California, Berkeley researcher, Marian Cleeves Diamond, found that playing contract bridge leaves people with higher numbers of immune cells. "Contract bridge was ideal for what we were after," she said. "It is the closest activity to a challenging card-sorting task that also contains multiple factors that should stimulate the dorsolateral cortex. Bridge players plan ahead, they use working memory, they deal with sequencing, initiation and numerous other higher order functions with which the dorsolateral cortex is involved."*

Diamond, M. C. 2003. Bridge and its effect on the immune system. University of California, Berkeley



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*"Seniors who regularly engaged in pastimes that stretched their minds... lowered their risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and other dementias by as much as 75 percent, compared with those who didn't exercise their minds....Verghese's team also solved a chicken-and-egg problem... Do mental activities really prevent dementia, or does dementia cause people to lose interest in mental activities? By screening out anyone who might have had dementia at the outset from their analysis, the researchers showed that leisure activities influenced dementia in their study, and not the other way around."*

Washington Post, 2003 reporting on; Verghese, J. 2003. The effects of mind games on Alzheimer's and dementia. Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx. USA