

## **Bio: A/Prof Ingrid van der Mei**

A/Prof van der Mei is a senior epidemiologist. She is originally from the Netherlands and came to Australia 15 years ago, where she started working at the Menzies Institute for Medical Research in Hobart. Her research focuses on identifying factors that cause MS and factors that influence the progression of the disease.

A significant finding in her career was that higher sun exposure, particularly during childhood and early adolescence, was associated with a lower risk of MS (British Medical Journal 2003). More recently, she found that higher vitamin D levels were associated with a lower risk of having relapses among people with MS (Annals of Neurology 2010). She currently manages the Australian MS Longitudinal Study, a research platform owned by MS Research Australia that aims to improve the lives of people with MS.

## **TOPIC :**

### **Understanding Primary Progressive MS**

There are currently no treatments for people with Primary Progressive MS (PPMS). The International Alliance for Progressive MS recognises this and is joining up research efforts internationally. It is my aim to make a difference to the puzzle of PPMS by conducting *epidemiological* research. I will 'teach' you a little bit of epidemiology by showing how we conducted our past studies and what some of our key findings were. I will then guide you through the methods of the PPMS Study, which is funded by MS Research Australia. I will also show you how we align the PPMS Study to the Australian MS Longitudinal Study, a Research Platform owned by MS Research Australia. Hopefully this work will contribute to unravelling some of PPMS's mysteries and ultimately lead to beneficial treatments and interventions.