Dementia training for hospital staff

Creating an informed and effective acute care workforce
About us

Alzheimer’s Society is the UK’s leading support and research charity for people with dementia and those who care for them. There are 750,000 people with dementia in the UK with numbers set to rise to one million by 2021.

Our vision is of a radically improved world for people with dementia. A world where they can fully contribute to family and community life with dignity, free from discrimination. A world where they, and those who live with and care for them, have their needs fully met. A world, ultimately, where dementia can be defeated.

Alzheimer’s Society is the dementia care training specialist for the health sector.
About your reputation for dementia care

Alzheimer’s Society wants to work with you to address the issues facing those responsible for the care of people with dementia in hospitals. Our training solutions will equip staff with the knowledge and skills to better engage with patients with dementia, improving the experience of a stay in hospital for those living with the condition.

Dementia care in hospitals

Reducing the length of stay in hospital for people with dementia

People with dementia over the age of 65 currently occupy up to a quarter of hospital beds at one time. An unacceptable variation in the provision of dementia care on general wards in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has led to a call to focus on the quality of dementia care in hospitals.

In general, patients with dementia tend to stay longer in hospital than patients without dementia. For the patient this has an impact on dementia symptoms, physical health and well-being. For the NHS there is an inevitable cost implication.

By creating a workforce who understand dementia and are equipped to respond appropriately to the needs of people with dementia in their care, you will help support patients living with the disease to leave hospital earlier.

Improving dignity for patients with dementia

Between March and June 2011 the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected 100 NHS hospitals, focusing on nutrition and dignity for older people in their care. While good practice was observed and identified poor practice was also identified, including privacy and dignity not being respected and patients not being given the assistance they needed to eat (CQC 2011).

Crucially, both staff and patients told the CQC that there were not always enough staff with the right training on duty to spend time giving care and staff themselves stated that they had little training in dementia (CQC 2011).

Improving the patient experience

The Royal College of Nursing (2011) report ‘Dignity in dementia; transforming general hospital care’ included a survey of people with dementia and carers. This found that 98% of respondents felt that staff having a poor understanding of dementia was a barrier to the provision of good quality care.

Ensuring your workforce has the appropriate knowledge and skills to care for people with dementia will help improve the patient experience and enable the provision of high quality, person-centred care.

Commissioning for Quality and Innovation (CQUIN)

Dementia is highlighted as an area requiring particular attention in ‘The Operating Framework for the NHS in England 2012/13’ and local commissioners are likely to be developing CQUINs in your local area on improving dementia care.

The CQUIN payment framework is also being recognised as important for the implementation of NICE quality standards. Alzheimer’s Society training courses directly link to the NICE Dementia clinical guideline 42 and can empower your staff to recognise and respond appropriately to people with dementia. This will contribute to your organisation being able to meet local and national CQUIN targets, including the third national CQUIN goal on improving diagnosis of dementia in hospitals.

Other benefits commonly associated with the provision of quality dementia training in hospitals include:

- enhanced reputation for the provision of quality dementia care
- reduction of anxiety and fear for patients with dementia
- reduction in falls
- reduction in the use of anti-psychotic medication
- reduction in dehydration and malnutrition in patients with dementia
- improved discharge procedures
- improved staff engagement with patients
- improved staff confidence in caring for patients with dementia, reduction in stress and sickness absence
- time saving efficiencies achieved through better understanding of patients’ needs
- creation of a dementia friendly environment
- reduction in complaints.
Dementia care in hospitals

Specialist dementia training

The Royal College of Psychiatrists Report of the National Audit of Dementia Care in General Hospitals 2011 highlights that awareness and understanding of dementia in frontline staff is a priority for both patients and carers. Only 32% of staff said that they had sufficient training in dementia care and the majority agreed that further training would be beneficial and would improve the level of care received by people with dementia (Royal College of Psychiatrists 2011).

Alzheimer’s Society Chief Executive Jeremy Hughes comments: ‘Given that people with dementia occupy a quarter of hospital beds and that many leave in worse health than when they were admitted, it is unacceptable that training in dementia care is not the norm. Staff want to be empowered with the tools they need to deliver good quality care to people with dementia.’

Alzheimer’s Society offers a range of training solutions specifically designed to improve the knowledge, skills and confidence of hospital staff when caring for people with dementia.

We work in partnership with NHS Trusts to ensure that the content and delivery of our training meets organisational requirements. Training is tailored to the specific needs of the organisation and can include specialist input on a variety of topics including nutrition, pain assessment and communication skills.

All training is evidence-based and provides knowledge towards meeting the Essence of Care Benchmarks (DoH 2010) and the objectives outlined in the National Dementia Strategy for England (DoH 2009).

Alzheimer’s Society dementia training for hospital staff will enable participants to develop the necessary skills to provide enhanced care for patients with dementia. We will equip staff with knowledge and skills to take back to their workplace, as well as the confidence to bring about a change to practice in dementia care in hospitals.

Learning outcomes

We deliver training on a variety of topics, suitable for staff working at all levels within the hospital. As training is always tailored to the unique needs of the organisations we work with, learning outcomes can vary.

Learning outcomes your staff can expect to achieve include:

- explain what dementia is, and describe common signs and symptoms of dementia
- recognise the difference between Alzheimer’s disease and mild cognitive impairment
- recognise the difference between delirium and dementia, and delirium with dementia
- examine the issues facing staff working with people with dementia in acute settings
- explain the concept ‘take time to save time’
- identify the impact of the care environment for a person with dementia
- explain what a person may be communicating through behaviour
- recognise the disease trajectory, and how this may impact on the provision of care at the end of life

Meeting the needs of staff at all levels

Our one day awareness workshop is specially designed for all staff who come into contact with people with dementia. This includes healthcare assistants, porters, housekeepers and receptionists.

For qualified staff, practice development leads, nursing staff and allied professionals we offer a more comprehensive programme delivered over two workshop days. Self directed study and project work can be incorporated into this programme, in which staff are asked to identify an area for improvement within their own work setting. Following the workshop days there is a 12 week project period during which participants identify an area for improvement within their work setting. They then regroup and present their project work to the trainer and clinical managers.

Additionally we can provide specialist training sessions on a variety of specific dementia related topics including end of life care, communication and behaviour.

Alzheimer’s Society specialist trainers

All training is delivered by nurses who are registered with the NMC, holding an active PIN, and have experience of working within the acute setting with older patients. Additionally, all trainers are registered with the Institute for Learning, which supports professional development and excellence in order to deliver the best possible training experience to participants.

Our trainers are all members of the Alzheimer’s Society Associate Trainer scheme. The scheme not only ensures that our trainers’ dementia care knowledge is second to none, but also provides unique access to the expertise of the leading dementia organisation focused on dementia in the UK, Alzheimer’s Society.

Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust

In 2010/11 we worked with the trust to deliver three one day awareness training sessions to healthcare assistants, and three two and a half day specialist courses to qualified nursing staff. In total we trained 120 staff from across the trust.

The qualified staff all devised and completed a practice development project, including:

Assessing pain in people with dementia – the use of a questionnaire to establish the understanding of pain in patients with dementia amongst ward staff. This included the trial of 3 different assessment tools.

Improving nutrition – addressing the issue of malnutrition, and the challenges of communication with patients with dementia at mealtimes. Snack boxes were introduced so that patients could eat as and when required, and red cups replaced clear water cups.

Feedback

‘The staff attending the dementia care in the acute setting course found the participation and information hugely beneficial. They have provided very positive feedback on how their knowledge and understanding of dementia has changed. They feel much more confident in caring for people with cognitive impairment, not just dementia, as they have more coping strategies to deal with challenging behaviours.’ Bridget Fordham, Dementia and Safeguarding Coordinator.
The Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust

In July 2011 we delivered our two day specialist training workshop to a multi-disciplinary group from Ipswich Hospital. Participants included qualified nursing staff and allied professionals.

The subsequent project work identified key areas for improvement to practice, including:

**Nutrition for patients with dementia** – two projects looked at this area, one in a general ward and the other in the emergency department. Issues around the identification of patients with dementia, and clarification of their requirements for assistance were addressed using a forget-me-not symbol to identify those with dementia, and a traffic light system to identify the level of assistance required at mealtimes.

**Improving understanding of people with dementia** – carried out by an Occupational Therapist, this project reflected on what had been covered in the workshop sessions and how the information could be disseminated to colleagues in the Occupational Therapy department. A 30 minute information session was devised with questionnaires to evaluate pre and post session knowledge.

**Feedback**

‘Excellent course that could also be rolled out to other healthcare workers i.e. HCAs’ Participant

‘Very impressed with the quality of the course, and the presentation of it.’ Participant

Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust

Since March 2010 we have delivered a series of training programmes to staff from a variety of disciplines at the trust.

Projects which were implemented as part of the practice improvement work included:

**Introducing the PAINAD Scale to the Emergency Department** – a project which introduced the Pain Assessment in Advanced Dementia (PAINAD) scale to the E.D. In total 100 members of staff were educated about the scale and evaluation showed a 39% increase in staff understanding. The PAINAD scale was implemented and is to continue to be used in the department.

**Chest physiotherapy in patients with dementia** – a project carried out by physiotherapists to identify any barriers to optimal chest treatments for people with dementia. Following referral patients were categorised according to level of cognitive impairment and treatment methods used were noted. It was found that in cognitively impaired patients more invasive techniques were used. As a result it was decided that respiratory physiotherapists should undergo a training programme with consideration for treating patients with dementia.

**Feedback**

‘This was an excellent course which encouraged interaction and discussion, thought provoking.’ Participant

‘Very informative and interesting two days. I really enjoyed the course and feel so much more confident and informed when nursing patients with dementia.’ Participant

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**References**