

E-BOOK

Competence in Dementia Care

Strengthen Your Team, Enhance Your Outcomes



Introduction

Understanding and managing dementia care is vital to professionals in a variety of settings, including outpatient clinics, hospitals, assisted living and life plan communities, rehabilitation therapy offices, skilled nursing facilities, and in-home care. Education in the latest evidence-based strategies can put powerful, practical tools in the hands of your care team. Your staff's knowledge of dementia care strategies helps ease the transition from one setting to another and supports comfortable, safe, positive daily interactions.

Whether your organization is adding dementia care, or your team members want to boost their existing skills, training is fundamental to enhancing your team's capabilities and your care outcomes.

Caring for people who have dementia holds many possibilities for improving their experiences. To achieve this goal, skilled clinicians and caregivers recognize the challenges people with dementia and their families encounter and are ready to employ strategies to ease their uncertainty, distress, and fear. That readiness comes from focused and specialized education. Understanding how dementia care has changed and progressed in recent decades can also be valuable to your team. To provide better care today, healthcare professionals can learn from where we have been, where we are now, and where we are projected to be in the future.

Ensuring health, wellness, and safety

“We have a problem, Houston. We do not have enough staff specialized in detecting and navigating care situations with those with brain changes.”

— BETH A.D. NOLAN, PHD, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND POLICY, TEEPA SNOW'S POSITIVE APPROACH TO CARE



Looking at past healthcare practices reminds us how important it is to protect the health, welfare, and safety of people living with dementia, observed Patricia Howell, RN, BSN, WCC, CFCS, a clinical support manager for a medical supply company. Only a few decades ago, many people living with dementia in nursing homes were tied to their beds and chairs to prevent wandering and for the stated purpose of keeping them safe from harm. However, Howell said, “In my personal opinion, the restraints may have contributed to isolation, harm, and possibly loss of life.”

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recognized the harmful outcomes and created an initiative to reduce the use of restraints. Unfortunately, Howell said, “It wasn’t enough to know it was harmful — that didn’t get communities to stop using restraints. There wasn’t a significant decline in restraint usage until regulations and fines were put in place.”

Then began a different approach that also limited the movement of nursing home residents with dementia. “Fast-forward to five to 10 years ago when there was a high number of antipsychotic medications being prescribed for people with dementia,” Howell said. “In my opinion, nursing home medical professionals used these drugs to eliminate physical restraints and yet unknowingly put into practice a chemical restraint to keep the resident quiet, in place, and away from unsafe wandering.”

Today, healthcare professionals can learn an array of strategies that respect persons receiving dementia care — whether at home, in a skilled nursing facility, in hospice, in assisted living, during rehabilitation therapy, or in another setting — and enhance their health, welfare, and safety.



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— PATRICIA HOWELL, RN, BSN, WCC, CFCS, CLINICAL SUPPORT MANAGER

More people needing dementia care

Although the rate of dementia worldwide is expected to remain relatively stable for the next three decades, researchers have predicted that the number of people with dementia will grow from 57.4 million cases in 2019 to 152.8 million cases in 2050, according to an article in *The Lancet*. Researchers attributed those increases mostly to population growth and population aging.

The increased numbers underline the attention needed to policies, detection, education, and care delivery, according to Beth A.D. Nolan, PhD, Director of Research and Policy, Teepa Snow’s Positive Approach to Care.

In terms of your organization, the projected increase means many more clinicians and nurse aides with expertise in dementia care will be needed. “We have a problem, Houston. We do not have enough staff specialized in detecting and navigating care situations with those with brain changes,” Nolan said.

The detection aspect is important in a variety of care settings. When people know their dementia status, they can learn to manage it better. “We’ve known this for years,” Nolan said. “So if a person does not know they have dementia, the results can be lost relationships, income, and mental health.”

Opportunities for improvement

Education about the disease and its management can help the person with dementia, their family, and the healthcare professionals providing care. “If staff have the tools they need to succeed, it improves their well-being,” Nolan said.

Knowledge and preparation can equip healthcare team members in any setting to remain calm, confident, and focused on the needs of the person experiencing dementia. Many programs can assist communities in providing better care for people with dementia “to avoid the negative outcomes of the past,” Howell said. “When we know better, we do better.”

Tailoring your approach to the person receiving care helps with the transition from hospital to nursing home, to assisted living, or to home care. “First and foremost, creating a person-directed approach is essential to the dignity of the patients and residents receiving care,” Howell said. “A commonsense approach is to partner with the residents to empower them and their caregivers to support the life that the resident wants to live.”

Recognizing challenges and risks

Learning about the different types of issues that arise and how to manage them are important elements of staff education in dementia care. Physical complications can add to the stress level of someone living with dementia and can compound the challenges of providing effective care. Behavior factors also may make interactions with someone living with dementia frustrating and difficult.

A person with dementia may at times experience these physical or behavior issues:

- Decreasing their eating and drinking
- Having balance issues or falls with injury
- Making verbal threats or striking out at others
- Wandering and getting lost
- Being unable to speak, understand others, express thoughts
- Having difficulty managing finances
- Losing personal items
- Having difficulty sleeping enough or sleeping excessively
- Contacting caregivers or family repeatedly
- Developing infections or pneumonias
- Refusing care



Areas of focus for training

Although these issues are common, the needs of a person with dementia can vary from day to day and hour to hour, and their behavior and responses while receiving care can vary just as much.

To personalize care, your clinicians and caregivers should be prepared to deal with these variations in respectful and effective ways. Simulations can help bring home the challenges and different perspectives of those receiving and giving care, as the Relias video, *A Day in the Life of Henry*, highlights. Online and blended learning options provide flexibility to meet the varied needs of healthcare professionals in different settings.

While planning your dementia care education program, consider these potential topics:

- Promoting effective communication
- Understanding dementia, depression, and delirium
- Managing behavior challenges
- Treating clinical conditions
- Responding to hallucinations and delusions
- Supporting functional abilities (activities of daily living)
- Building relationships and trust
- Preventing infections in care environments
- Dealing with sexual challenges
- Meeting individuals where they are
- Working with family and friends
- Preventing and responding to abuse
- Understanding ethical and legal factors

With our partners, we are committed to developing dementia care solutions that help solve complex business problems across the healthcare continuum.



Teepa Snow's Positive Approach to Care

Positive Approach to Care (PAC) is an educational company founded in 2006 by occupational therapist Teepa Snow. PAC now collaborates to help improve dementia care in over 30 countries worldwide. PAC provides virtual and in-person events and trainings to professionals, family members, and the general public, with the mission of creating a more inclusive culture for people living with brain change. Resources, including an online support group, streaming videos, DVDs, books, posters, and other products, are available through the PAC website. PAC also provides outstanding free resources such as video clips, webinars, blog posts, and a monthly newsletter.



How Relias can help

Your residents with memory care needs deserve clinicians and staff equipped to provide personalized care. Relias offers an extensive library of courses to keep your staff up to date with the latest evidence-based practices in [dementia care](#).

Using the Relias Platform, you can easily assign, track, and report on the progress of your staff, as well as:

- + Reduce risk for your residents by providing more consistent, high-quality care.
- + Increase staff retention by reducing stress and frustration.
- + Support your staff by easily tracking their engagement with Relias courses.