

The importance of personhood

Industry summary based on a qualitative Flinders University Study,
funded by the Cognitive Decline Partnership Centre

The problem

- Providing quality care for people with dementia and concurrently meeting the growing demand for aged care services is a significant challenge internationally.
- When it comes to planning for current and future residential care needs, limited information is available on what people living with dementia and their family members consider to be determinants of 'quality' in care.

The study

- Key determinants of quality were determined from in-depth interviews with people with dementia or cognitive impairment living in residential care or the community (n=15) and family members of people with dementia (n=26).



The results

- Care that supported a resident's 'personhood', that is being treated as a person and not their disease, was identified as an important foundation for quality for people with dementia and their family members.
- Access to meaningful activities and opportunities to feel useful and valued were identified as important ways to support personhood in residential care.
- Family members also stressed the importance of a supportive physical environment in the care home.
- People with dementia felt that maintaining a connection with their family was an important contributor to their experience of good-quality residential care.



Conclusion and future opportunities:

- People with dementia were able to successfully participate in interviews to discuss the meaning of quality in residential care.
- Understanding the perspective of people with cognitive impairment, and their families, on issues of relevance to them, will lead to better care and services.
- To fully support the wellbeing of residents, future interventions to improve quality in residential care should consider the psychological and social aspects of care, particularly the interactions with the staff and the social environment, as of equal importance to the health-related and physical aspects of the care setting.
- Key determinants of care quality can be measured via the Consumer Choice Index – 6 Dimensions (CCI-6D) questionnaire. This can be used by researchers and residential care organisations to measure quality of care from consumers' perspectives.

