

Improving communication to engage people with dementia

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Introduction

With high numbers of inpatients and residents within hospitals and residential aged care facilities, it is important that appropriate person-centred language is used when talking about dementia and with people with dementia. Appropriate language must be accurate, respectful, inclusive and non-stigmatising. We wanted to develop a poster to encourage the use of appropriate language, but needed to understand what our teams were already doing and what tools they were already employing.

Utilising appropriate, inclusive and non-stigmatising language enhances confused patients and their families level of understanding. Dementia and delirium affects thinking, behaviour, the ability to perform every day tasks, mood, attention and activity levels.

Using appropriate language can contribute and support patient/resident safety, improves understanding and encourages participation in decision making wherever possible.



Aim

The aim of the project is to enable staff to use appropriate language when talking about de and with people with dementia.



We can improve hospital care of patients with delirium



Be alert to delirium and the risk of harm for patients



Recognise and respond to patients with delirium



Provide safe and high-quality care tailored to the needs of patients with delirium

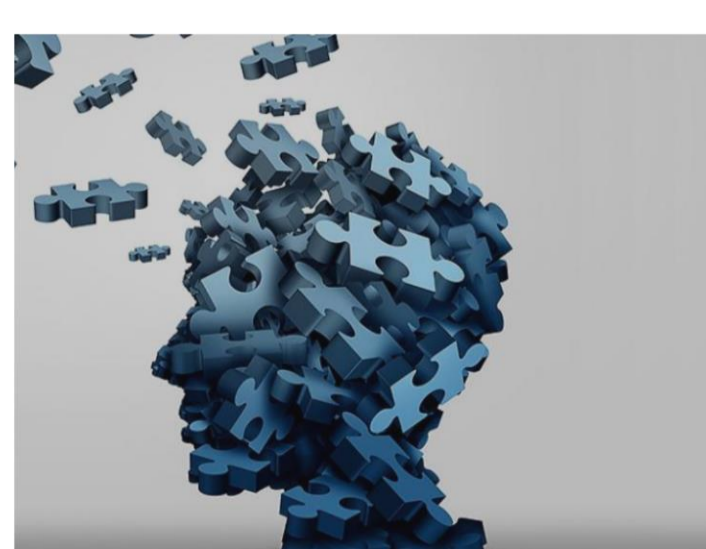
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Background

- 10% to 18% of Australians aged 65 years or older have delirium at time of admission to hospital.
- Further 2% to 8% develop delirium during hospital stay.
- Approx. 40% of inpatients have dementia
- 52% of residents in memory assistance homes have dementia.
- Many deliriums go undiagnosed – approx. 50%
- In Australia – estimated that 447,115 people live with dementia (2019)



Method

Process used: Using a claim, concern and issues (CCI) approach, focus groups of RN's, EN's and AIN's and interested residents were asked at each MPS facility, to reflect on the language they used when talking to or about people with dementia. 35 nursing staff and 1 resident participated in the 4 focus groups.

CLAIM: What positive language do I use when I am talking to or about a person with dementia?

CONCERN: What negative language do I use when I am talking to or about a person with dementia?

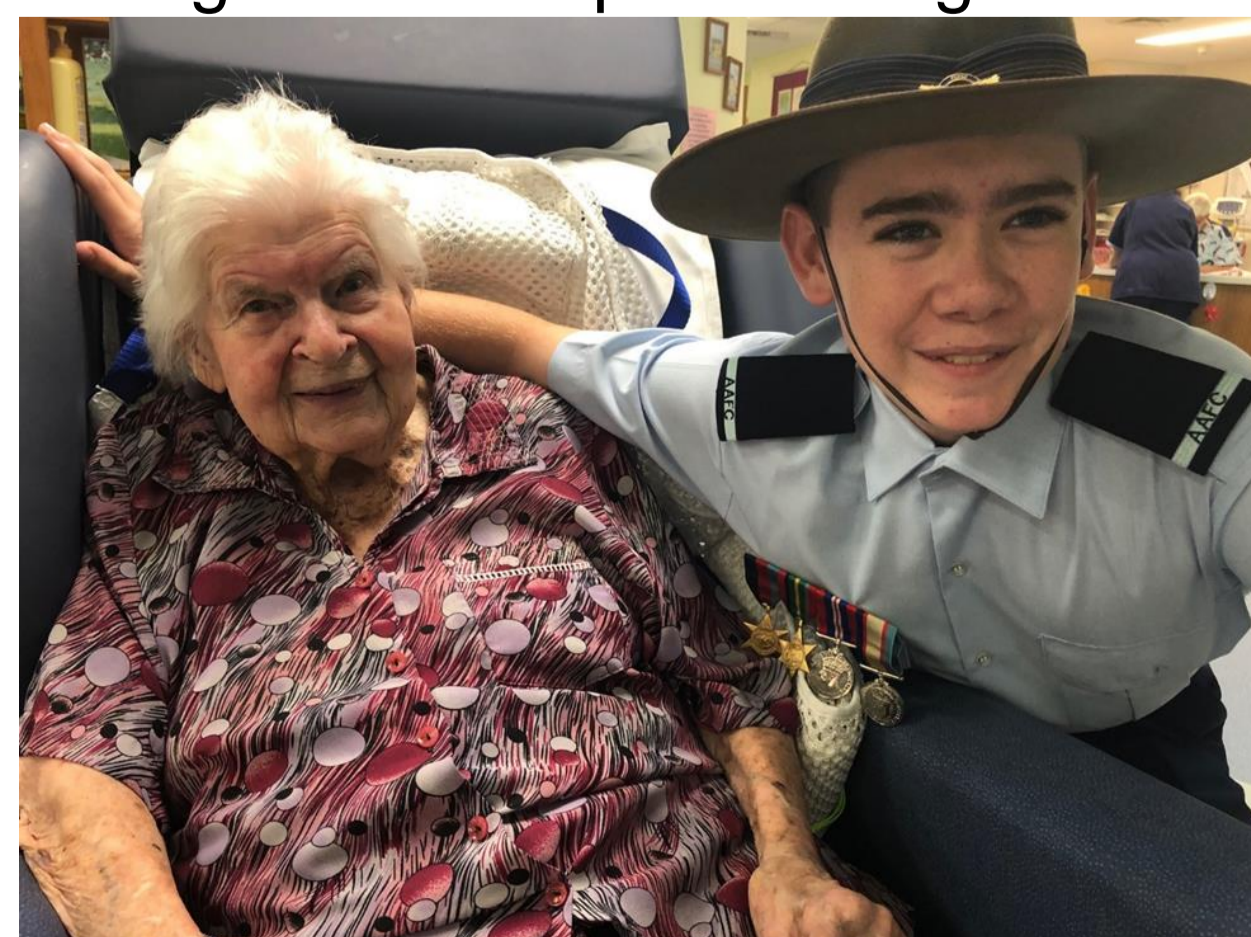
ISSUE: How can we change our language to be more positive and appropriate?

CCI Activity



Conclusion

Creating relationships across generations



CCI Feedback

- Highlighted a range of appropriate & inappropriate language used in our everyday setting.
- Staff developed a deeper understanding
- Enabled staff to be more aware of not reinforcing stereotypes or myths about dementia
- Importance of getting to know our patients/residents
- Awareness of non-verbal language
- Staff self-awareness & self-care

Strategies for communication with people with dementia

- Treat the person with dignity and respect
- Include family in care
- Keep sentences short and simple
- Allow time for the person to respond; give them time to speak; listen; don't finish their sentence; avoid background noise
- Use diversion therapy
- Offer to help
- Use the TOP 5 care plan and 'cloud' chart
- Know your person's history
- Encourage own family photos and familiar objects
- Encourage but don't rush the person
- Encourage independence and socialising
- A smile, a touch and shared laughter can help. Negative body language can easily be picked up
- Talk about things the person is interested in – their past, family, hobby etc
- Know the person's reality; don't orientate them to the current time frame join the person in their time
- Maintain regular routines to help minimise confusion and assist communication
- Spend quality time with person – read a book, go for a walk, have a chat
- Don't argue or use condescending, argumentative, forceful language and don't take things personally

Outcomes

- A more positive culture
- Enhanced communication and relationships
- Realisation that each one of us can initiate and influence change
- Awareness of modelling positive behaviours and language
- Improved response to people with dementia/delirium

References

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