



Dementia and cognitive impairment

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10
min

Time needed to run this module with your staff

OVERVIEW OF MODULE

Although dementia is a very common condition in Australia, there is still a lot of misunderstanding and stigma associated with dementia. The way we talk about dementia and the words we use to describe dementia can have a big impact. For example, when talking about people with dementia, you should use terms like 'people living with dementia' and avoid words that are negative, like 'sufferer.' For more examples on how to talk about dementia, visit Dementia Australia at dementia.org.au

This education module provides staff with information about pain experienced by people living with dementia in aged care.

Learning objectives

- 1** Describe behaviours that may indicate a person living with dementia is in pain
- 2** Identify different assessment tools used to assess pain in people living with dementia

Key messages

-  A person living with dementia also experiences pain, even if they can't tell you. Try to communicate with them about their pain as best as possible
-  'Change behaviours' may be a sign that a person living with dementia has pain (e.g., yelling, calling out, groaning)
-  There are tools designed specifically for assessing pain in people living with dementia

Length of the education module

The 10 minutes includes:



Watching a short video



Post-video discussion/questions led by trainer, focusing on the learning objectives for this module

Trainer preparation prior to running the module

At least 30 minutes should be set aside for the trainer to prepare for running this module. The following preparations are suggested:

- Review this module guide and discussion notes
- Watch the video before training
- Review documentation on the people living with dementia at your aged care facility/aged care provider organisation, and their current pain management
- Prepare at least two examples of any behaviours from your residents/patients/clients that suggest that they have pain. If needed, these examples can be used to prompt more discussion
- Review and become familiar with the tools used at your aged care facility/aged care provider organisation. For pain assessment in people living with dementia (e.g., Abbey Pain Scale, PAINAD)
- Read key resources when needed (see below)
- Print participant handouts, one for each staff member attending the education module.
- Practice the session using the Education Module Script provided, noting the timing needed to complete the module in about 10 minutes

Key resources to support this topic (background reading)

- For a full and comprehensive exploration of this topic, refer to the source reference "Pain in Residential Aged Care Facilities: Management Strategies, 2nd Edition": <https://www.apsoc.org.au/publications> (optional)
- Primary resources are the Pain Management Guide (PMG) Toolkit 2nd Edition and the Pain in Residential Aged Care Facilities: Management Strategies 2nd Edition.
- In particular, the following resource and appendices are relevant for pain with dementia and must be utilised in the context of the information contained in the "Pain in Residential Aged Care Facilities: Management Strategies, 2nd Edition" book, rather than in isolation:
 - The following resources can be found here: <https://www.apsoc.org.au/Pain-in-RACF2-Resources>
 - Resource 4: Pain behaviours used in validated observational pain scales (1-minute read)
 - These appendices can be found here: <https://www.apsoc.org.au/Pain-in-RACF2-Appendices>
 - Appendix 5: Abbey Pain Scale (2-minute read)
 - Appendix 6: Pain Assessment IN Advanced Dementia (PAINAD) Scale (3-minute read)
- The below is a useful, free education module providing further information about assessing pain in a person living with dementia (optional to complete):
 - **PAIC 15:** This e-learning module guides you through using the PAIC15 (Pain Assessment in Impaired Cognition) Scale when observing and evaluating behavioural signs of pain in people living with impaired cognition (e.g., people with dementia). The module takes about 30–45 minutes and is available at: <https://paic15.com/en/e-training-en/>

Material needed to run the education module

- A computer with sound/speaker capacity to show the short video for this module
- Printed participant handouts
- Printed copy of this document for you to refer to

Running the education module

The following script can be used to run this module with your staff at your aged care facility/aged care provider organisation. This script includes:

- **boxed text**, which can be read directly to the staff when running this module
- **<directions>**, which are actions to do at certain times e.g., playing short videos, giving out participant handouts
- *Text in italics*, which is additional information to promote discussion e.g., prompt questions for the trainer to ask to nudge the discussion forward, suggested answers to discussion questions

Education module script

<Begin session by giving a participant handout to each staff member.>

1

Introduction and video

Today, we are going to be running one of the education sessions that is part of the painACT Program. Each session focuses on one pain topic for about 10 minutes. The topic today is 'Dementia and cognitive impairment' Today, we will learn more about identifying and assessing pain in people living with dementia. First, I'll show you a short video about what changes in behaviour might indicate that a person living with dementia may be experiencing pain.

<Show the video 'Dementia and cognitive impairment' (video runtime is 4.5 minutes).>

The video showed examples of different behaviours that could indicate that a person living with dementia may have pain. Are there any questions or comments about the video?

<Allow for a minute or two of comments or questions.>

2

Discussion about video

<Begin discussion on key messages. Let participants know that it might be helpful to write some notes under the 'post-video discussion/questions' section on the handout. Also prompt them to complete the post-video questions to help solidify their learnings.>



**A person living with dementia also experiences pain, even if they can't tell you.
Try to communicate with them about their pain as best as possible**

As mentioned in the video, people living with dementia also experience pain. But as their dementia advances, they may lose the ability to verbalise that they are in pain. It can be difficult to know at what point a person may or may not be able to reliably verbalise the pain they experience.

My first question is:

What techniques can we use that may help a person living with dementia tell us about their pain?

Some techniques were discussed in the video. These include:

- **Good engagement with the resident:** Sit down with them and make eye contact, then speak clearly, not too quickly, and allow plenty of time for their response. It is important that you show genuine interest and concern.
- **Good environment:** Good lighting, calm and quiet atmosphere, little distractions.
- **Good communication:** Choose words for pain that they understand, ask about their current pain so they do not have to rely on their memory, and remind them of old injuries or disease that may be relevant.



'Change behaviours' may be a sign that a person living with dementia has pain (e.g., yelling, calling out, groaning)

The aim of this discussion point is for staff to reflect and share with others on actual behaviours that residents may be exhibiting or have experienced in the past.

The video also showed that a person who is unable to speak about their pain and/or can't fully understand the pain they are experiencing, and so they may instead show change behaviours.

My second question is:

Are there any behaviours from our residents/patients/clients that suggest that they are in pain? Any specific examples that you can think of?

<Allow for two minutes of responses from staff.>

If there is minimal engagement from staff, share some of your own examples. It's best if they are based on aged care residents/patients/clients currently at your aged care facility/aged care provider organisation. It may help to write your examples below beforehand.

Some examples may include:

- A resident/patient/client groans when showering and lifting their arm above shoulder.
- A resident/patient/client fidgets with their clothing frequently.
- A resident/patient/client is often withdrawn and doesn't want to do activities.
- A resident/patient/client strikes out at staff when transferred from bed.
- A resident/patient/client refuses their food.

These are good examples, and I'm glad you've noticed them because they all sound like behaviours that may indicate a person is in pain. Then again, they may be behaviours that are not pain-related, but we should always consider 'are these behaviours due to pain?'



There are tools designed specifically for assessing pain in people living with dementia

The aim of this discussion point is for staff to reflect on the tool used at their aged care facility/aged care provider organisation to assess pain in people with dementia.

There are specific tools that we use for assessing pain in people living with dementia.
At this aged care facility/aged care provider organisation
we use _____
Are there any questions about the tool we use? And what is your experience using this tool?

<Allow for two minutes of responses from staff.>

This is an opportunity for questions and comments from staff about using tools to assess pain in people living with dementia, as well as share any tips or challenges associated with using these tools. It may be that the trainer does not have an answer for all the questions staff may have. The trainer may need to do further reading or seek advice elsewhere before feeding back answers at another time.

3

Wrapping up

Does anyone have any questions?

<Allow brief time for questions if possible or invite staff to ask you questions personally whenever they have a moment.>

All right, take some time to record your answers to the questions in your participant handout, but that's it for today! Thank you, everyone.

For more information, refer to the "Pain in Residential Aged Care Facilities: Management Strategies, 2nd Edition"
resource: <https://www.apsoc.org.au/publications>