



Dementia support services get a bouquet, but funding for them gets a brickbat

New research

Introduction

New research commissioned by Alzheimers NZ has found dementia support services provided by local Alzheimers organisations meet the needs of people living with dementia and enable them to live their best possible lives. Thirty-five people living with dementia were interviewed in mid-to late 2020 and 291 completed a written survey.

However, the research also found the lack of government funding restricted the scope and availability of dementia services, and that more work needs to go into developing services that are culturally relevant, targeted at rural and isolated areas, and that ensure good information about dementia is provided to other health providers.

Services meet people's needs and prove useful



Most people rely on the local Alzheimers organisation as the only entity providing them with regular support. They know about the services that are available and find them easy to access, and they say the information they receive is useful.

The Alzheimers organisations provide a range of services, including individualised support, day programmes, activities, home visits, clubs, information and advice and referral processes.

People living with dementia reported they feel respected and are treated with dignity. Most felt they have an opportunity to decide for themselves what services suit them to live well and as independently as possible.

People who were referred to the local Alzheimers organisations after their initial diagnosis found it easier to adjust to the diagnosis.

People with dementia said the services they receive strengthen their sense of confidence and independence, increase their sense of control over decisions that affect them, and give them a sense of purpose, connection and belonging. Participating in activities helps to reduce their sense of stigma about having dementia.

Care partners accessing support services value the opportunities provided in support group activities for connection and community, learning about living with dementia, and sharing experiences in a confidential and trusted environment.

But, there are service gaps!



Unsurprisingly, the research found whānau Māori want more culturally relevant services, including organisations working with kaumātua; hui at marae; staff who can speak te reo Māori and increased visibility in Māori communities.

The research also found that people with dementia in rural and isolated areas miss out on services.

People living with dementia would also like to see more information provided to other health providers to increase their awareness of the services and support available for people living with dementia.

The research includes recommendations for improvements, such as strengthening cultural competency and staff diversity, flexibility to fit changing needs, and developing a greater variety of activities, including for those living with young onset dementia.



Summary

In summary, the research found local Alzheimers organisations are supporting people with dementia to live their best possible lives. But funding limits restrict what's available and New Zealand can do much better.

The research was undertaken by Litmus Research. To read the full report, which includes a longer summary, go to alzheimers.org.nz/explore/research/