



Mental Health Nurse Academics (UK)

Position Statement on Dementia Care

Living with dementia can be challenging and sometimes overwhelming, but with the right support living well with dementia can become a reality rather than just an aspiration. It is estimated that there are 800,000 people with dementia in the UK, one-third of people with dementia live in a care home and at least two-thirds of care home residents in the UK have dementia. Also there are estimated to be 17,000 younger people with dementia living in the UK (i.e. under the age of 65 years). Some studies argue that these figures are an underestimation of the true figures due to the difficulties people experience in receiving a diagnosis of dementia. As people live longer it is predicted that the incidence of dementia will double by 2030 and more than triple by 2050. The challenge for society is to ensure that dementia care strategies both now and in the future are fit for purpose with a greater emphasis on improving the quality of life and wellbeing of those living with dementia.

Mental health nurses in a diverse number of roles play a crucial role in the delivery of dementia care within the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. Taking this into consideration Mental Health Nurse Academics UK at a strategic level is committed to influencing and promoting education, research and values-based mental health nursing practice for the benefit of people living with dementia. This approach is underpinned by a commitment to seeing mental health nurses promote activity that through real partnership listens to the voices of people with dementia and also encourages the co-creation and co-production of dementia care strategies.

It is important to acknowledge that this aspiration is work in progress. Historically government and charitable spending on dementia research has been significantly lower than in other long term conditions such as cancer and heart disease. This picture is now starting to change as there is an increasing focus on promoting dementia research in all the four countries of the UK. This increasing focus compliments the ongoing work in the areas of care standards, nursing strategy, and curriculum development.

To ensure that this work and increased focus on dementia research recognises the integral role that mental health nursing offers Mental Health Nurse Academics UK further advocates:

- A focus on people living with dementia as the central drivers of research and innovation
- Increasing the availability of high quality education programmes for mental health nurses at pre-registration and post-graduate level
- Developing the mental health nurse's role in the delivery of dementia friendly communities
- The need for research that scopes the activities of mental health nurses in dementia care
- The need for research on mental health nurse-led psychological therapies and care strategies
- A need to focus on strategies for increasing the numbers of mental health nurses specialising in dementia care
- Recognising the potential of the recovery model in dementia care
- Influencing policy development in the dementia field

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