

Hearing and vision health for people with dementia in residential care:

Knowledge/attitudes/practice in England, Korea, India, Greece, Indonesia and Australia.

Piers Dawes, Iracema Leroi, Nisha Chauhan, Woojae Han, Vijaykumar Harbishettar, Dona Jayakody, Louise Jones, Asri Maharani, Angelita Martini, Antonios Politis, Suhan King Prabhaka, Sandra Prew, Gregor Russell, Rogers-Angus Sturrock, Sri Sunarti, Joanne Taylor, Mark Worthington

Introduction

At least 75% of people living in residential aged care have hearing impairment and >40% have vision impairment. But hearing and vision difficulties are frequently under-recognised or incompletely managed. The impact of hearing and vision impairment in the context of dementia is associated with worsening cognitive decline and behavioural disturbances, reduced quality of life, and greater care burden.

Method

A cross-sectional survey of care home staff to investigate self-reported knowledge, attitudes and care approach information for hearing/vision needs for residents with dementia in England, South Korea, India, Greece, Indonesia and Australia. Respondents were asked to respond to statements on a five-point scale according to their agreement, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, or YES/NO response. The questions were clustered according to three themes regarding hearing/vision care: Knowledge (what is known); attitudes (what is thought); practice (what is done).

Results

Respondents reported that they were mostly aware which residents have hearing or vision support needs, though they were generally not aware how to identify hearing/vision difficulties or how to refer for assessment. A substantial minority of respondents reported they were not confident in supporting residents' use of assistive hearing/vision devices, the main reason being lack of training. Respondents reported most residents not able to use hearing/vision devices effectively, the main reasons being not fitting, not tolerated or lost/broken devices. A minority of respondents reported routine checking of hearing/vision devices, with no specially designated staff responsible for hearing/vision needs. Variation between countries was not significant after accounting for number of years in the profession and having received training in dementia support.

Conclusion

Hearing/vision support for people with dementia in residential aged care facilities could be optimised by providing guidelines and training, and fostering a long-term professional work force.