



'The D Word': Allied Health led dementia professional development

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Aim: To identify if providing Allied Health led interdisciplinary education in dementia care is feasible, leads to an increase in confidence, and establish whether there is a need for further education.

Method: At the Royal Melbourne Hospital, a gap was identified in the knowledge of staff, and subsequent education available in the dementia space specific to Allied Health clinicians.



A professional development program was developed in response to this, in 2017, targeted for all staff who work with patients with dementia, called 'The "D" Word: Working with people with Dementia (a multidisciplinary approach). This program was run again in 2018, renamed as 'The "D" Word: Working with people with Dementia (the inpatient interdisciplinary response)'.

In 2018, 120 Allied Health and Nursing professionals attended a one-day program with presentations from: Medical, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Neuropsychology and Dietetics. Each discipline addressed specific, advertised objectives centring around evidence-based, patient-centred care for those inpatients with dementia. There was two case studies which the presentations centred around for practical application.

Results: Of the 120 attendees, 100 (83%) responded to the post-program survey. The average attendee was an Allied Health practitioner with 1 year of experience, working in the acute setting. The following was found:

- 89% felt the objectives were met
- 88.5% identified presentations as very good/excellent
- 78% rated increased confidence with the treatment of dementia
- 77% identified they would like further education in their specific field of work.
- 85% would recommend the course to their colleagues
- 19% rated the nursing presentation as excellent

The following topics were identified as requiring further exploration; palliative care, de-escalating aggressive behaviour, education of families and the carer experience.

Significance of the findings to Allied Health: Providing Allied Health led education with medical and nursing colleagues is feasible. Additional education leads to increased confidence when treating dementia and there is a conclusive need for further education in this space.

