Understanding Nutrition and Dementia

Nutrition and dementia care: Developing an evidence-based model for delivering person-centred care in nursing homes

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Introduction
Eating and drinking difficulties are a major factor contributing to ill-health, frailty and reduced quality of life for people living with dementia. Consequently there are complex challenges for the caregiver in ensuring nutritional needs are met. Whilst a number of interventions have been identified to support food and drink intake, there have been no systematic studies to understand the factors that improve nutritional care from the perspectives of all those responsible for delivering care in nursing homes. The aim of this study was to develop a conceptual model to understand eating and drinking for people with dementia from a range of providers, thus supporting credibility from the perspective of the end-user.

Methods
An exploratory qualitative design using purposive sampling was used.

A series of nine focus groups and five semi-structured interviews were conducted with 50 participants who were involved or who have a level of responsibility for providing food and drink and nutritional care in nursing homes. These included:
• Care home staff: nurses, care assistants, managers, food service providers n=30
• Family carers n=8
• Dietitians n=3
• Speech and language therapists n=9).

Discussions followed an agreed structure, were tape recorded, transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings
The core themes have informed a collaboratively developed, person-centred model for quality improvements in nutritional care.

Outputs
This model was used to design new education and training tools that can be readily translated into existing programmes.

Further work
Further research is needed to evaluate whether these evidence informed approaches can be implemented successfully and adopted into practice and policy contexts and demonstrate effectiveness for people living with dementia.

The project has received ethical approval from BU Research Ethics Committee. The project is funded by the Burdett Trust for Nursing.

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Figure 1 Model of themes

Figure 2 Reflective workbook

Figure 3 Training film

For more information visit:
www.bournemouth.ac.uk/nutrition-dementia

1 Wilson, L. 2014. Hydration and Older People in the UK: Addressing the Problem, Understanding the Solutions. London: ILC-UK