

Culturally Appropriate Dementia Care

In 2022, there were almost 490,000 people living with dementia in Australia. It is estimated that a third of people living with dementia are from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. As seniors from CALD backgrounds may revert to their mother tongue as they age, it is essential that aged care organisations design services that are responsive to the cultural, linguistic and spiritual needs of consumers including establishing culturally appropriate dementia care units in residential care. Ensuring that aged care consumers can speak in their preferred language is a basic human right under the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is in line with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Standards, and represents good practice. Further, the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety recognised the need to deliver better care to diverse population groups.

Key considerations

Attitudes

Attitudes toward dementia can vary amongst communities such as being a normal part of ageing, associated with 'madness' or mental health, seen as fate or a punishment from God or as a result of hardship or trauma. In addition, there can be guilt and shame at placing parents going into residential care facilities. As stigma is attached to dementia amongst some CALD groups, people living with dementia further suffer from exclusion and social isolation. Mindcare Collective's *Moving Pictures* project narrates the experiences of carers of CALD people living with dementia and raises awareness of dementia in CALD communities.

[Visit Mindcare Collective's Moving Pictures Short Films](#)

Diagnosis

People from CALD backgrounds often access aged care services at a crisis point. Limited awareness of dementia by people from CALD backgrounds about dementia results in delayed diagnosis, poorer diagnosis and a higher burden on families, carers, and the health and aged care systems. Standard assessment tools are influenced by factors such as education level, cultural background, and language proficiency. Misdiagnosis of dementia amongst people from CALD backgrounds has been reported by aged care workers and multicultural service providers. Lack of English language proficiency and literacy issues may affect the diagnosis and misdiagnosis of dementia. It is recommendable that people from CALD backgrounds are assessed by the Rowland Universal Dementia Assessment Scale (RUDAS). RUDAS is a short cognitive screening instrument with the benefit of "minimising the effects of cultural learning and language diversity on the assessment of baseline cognitive performance¹." In line with implementing this assessment tool, during the

¹Dementia Australia, 2022, Rowland Universal Dementia Assessment Scale (RUDAS), available at <https://www.dementia.org.au/resources/rowland-universal-dementia-assessment-scale-rudas>

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assessment process it is important to apply a cultural sensitivity and culturally appropriate assessment approaches.

[Download RUDAS Assessment tool](#)

Culturally appropriate dementia care

Key issues for organisations to consider to better cater for the cultural, linguistic, and spiritual needs and preferences of people living with dementia:

- Build rapport with CALD communities, families, and carers to establish relationships of trust when it comes to informing them about dementia;
- Develop dementia resources that are sensitive to the cultural, linguistic, and spiritual needs of people from CALD backgrounds;
- Co-design dementia resources and service models with people from CALD communities, families, and carers;
- Inform and raise awareness about dementia care in community languages to CALD community members, carers, and families;
- Facilitate and support mentoring and training to aged care staff about culturally appropriate dementia care;
- Establish culturally appropriate dementia care units in residential aged care facilities that cater for the cultural, linguistic, and spiritual needs and are sensitive to experiences of past trauma of people from CALD backgrounds
- Work in partnership with peak bodies and specialists in dementia care and multicultural community engagement including the Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care program in relation to developing culturally appropriate dementia care responses;
- Utilise existing resources to inform about and deliver culturally appropriate dementia care including the Mindcare Collective's *Moving Pictures* resources, in-language resources for people from CALD backgrounds and families and professionals, and application of the RUDAS assessment tool.

[Dementia Australia - Professional development, training and resources for aged care workers](#)

Useful resources

[CALD Dementia Research Action Plan](#) National Ageing Research Institute

[Applying a Diversity Lens to Dementia Care Webinar](#) Centre for Cultural Diversity in Ageing

[Dementia and Culturally Diverse Communities](#) Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria

[MEANT TO CARE about culturally relevant dementia care](#) Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria

LAST UPDATED: OCTOBER 2022

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