

Dementia patients need urgent support after diagnosis

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There is an urgent need for support from outside the family after diagnosis of dementia according to a study led by researchers from the University of Hertfordshire.

Immediate and on-going support needs

The study, published in *PLOS Medicine*, explores how [healthcare professionals](#) can better understand the challenges that [dementia patients](#) and their carers face around the time of diagnosis, as well identifying their immediate and on-going support needs.

Dr Frances Bunn, senior research fellow in evidence-based practice at the University of Hertfordshire said: "The needs of people with

[dementia](#) and their carers are complex and varied which makes diagnosing and supporting this group particularly challenging. But it is clear from our analysis that support needs to be on-going, flexible, and sensitive to their needs."

Dementia diagnosis

The researchers reviewed the experience, beliefs, feelings and attitudes of patients and their carers around dementia diagnosis. Focusing on those patients who lived and were cared for within the community, the study also tried to understand barriers to early diagnosis and what type of support is useful for newly diagnosed patients.

Huge impact

Despite improvements in the speed of diagnosis, unawareness or denial of the signs and symptoms of dementia by the patients and people close to them can still delay [diagnosis](#). Being diagnosed as a person with dementia has a huge impact on the identity of the patient, leading to feelings of loss, anger, uncertainty and frustration, and has major impacts on roles and relationships both within the family and in wider social networks.

Bunn continued: "Those making decisions about the timing and delivery of services need appropriate expertise and training. So, future research must focus on the development and evaluation of ways to meet those needs."

More information: Bunn F, Goodman C, Sworn K, Rait G, Brayne C, et al. (2012) "Psychosocial Factors That Shape Patient and Carer Experiences of Dementia Diagnosis and Treatment: A Systematic Review of Qualitative Studies." *PLoS Med* 9(10): e1001331.

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Provided by University of Hertfordshire

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