

# Research shows people with dementia need better support services

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(Medical Xpress)—People diagnosed with dementia in Norfolk and Suffolk need better access to support services according to a new report from the University of East Anglia (UEA).

The NHS aims to increase the dementia diagnoses rate in England from the current level of 45 per cent to 66 per cent by the end of March 2015. In Norfolk and Suffolk the [dementia diagnosis](#) rate is already below the national average - ranging from 33.5 per cent to 42.9 per cent in the last quarter of 2013.

Published today, a new report looks at why dementia in Norfolk and Suffolk is going un-diagnosed, and investigates how GPs can be helped to meet Department of Health targets.

It is hoped that these findings could be used to help increase dementia diagnosis rates nationally.

Lead researcher Margaret Fox, from UEA's School of Rehabilitation Sciences, said: "GPs in Norfolk and Suffolk are currently diagnosing a below average number of cases. By this time next year, they will be expected to identify around 50 per cent more suspected cases for referral to memory clinics in order to reach the government dementia diagnosis target of 66 per cent.

"We surveyed over 400 GPs in 108 practices to try and find out why this was happening; 113 GPs responded to the survey. We found that GPs are

confident in their ability to identify cases of dementia for onward referral. They also recognise the benefits to patients and their carers of a timely dementia diagnosis at an early stage of the disease.

"However, they reported concerns about the quality and availability of support for people after they are diagnosed, and their families.

"The low diagnosis rate may reflect a lack of confidence among GPs in the availability of [support services](#). The survey revealed that GPs need better resources so that they can provide good advice to newly diagnosed patients and their carers and help sign-post them to existing services. We hope this would give doctors the confidence to increase diagnosis rates.

"This study has also identified a need to map the existing support services in the region for people with dementia and to identify gaps in services. This could then be used to shape a strategy for improving and developing services."

Recommendations include:

- Creating a regional database of local memory and post-diagnosis support services.
- Identifying best practice in memory and support services.
- Developing a minimum standard of support for all patients diagnosed with dementia and their carers.
- Identifying areas that do not meet minimum standards of support.

While diagnosis rates are lower than elsewhere in the country, GPs were found to be more positive about diagnosing [dementia](#) than they were in 2009.

**More information:** Fox, Margaret, Fox, C., Cruickshank, W, Penhale,

Bridget, Poland, Fiona and Steel, Nicholas (2014)" Understanding the dementia diagnosis gap in Norfolk and Suffolk: a survey of general practitioners." *Quality in Primary Care*.

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