

# Better educated nurses linked to better outcomes in surgical patients with dementia

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A new study found that surgical patients with coexisting Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) are more likely to die within 30 days of admission and to die following a complication compared with

patients without AD RD. Having more nurses with at least a Bachelor of Science in Nursing at the bedside improved the likelihood of good outcomes for all patients, but it had a much greater effect for patients with AD RD.

The *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* study is the first to examine the effects of clinician education on [surgical outcomes](#) for patients with AD RD. It included 353,333 Medicare beneficiaries who underwent general, orthopedic, or vascular surgery in one of 531 hospitals in California, Florida, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

"Patients with dementia are clinically complex and vulnerable, and nurses play a key role in monitoring and protecting these individuals from unwanted complications such as delirium and pneumonia after surgery," said lead author Elizabeth White, of the Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Research at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing. "To do this, nurses must be able to think critically, problem solve, and work well within interdisciplinary teams. These are all competencies emphasized in bachelor degree nursing programs."

**More information:** Elizabeth M. White et al, Lower Postsurgical Mortality for Individuals with Dementia with Better-Educated Hospital Workforce, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2018). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.15355](#)

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