

# Dementia audit summary

## Background

Dementia is becoming more common as the proportion of older people in society increases. Changes in the brain make thinking things through, remembering and communicating more difficult. As the condition worsens, the person becomes more reliant on others to remind them to eat and take medicines and to carry out tasks such as washing and dressing.

It is important that healthcare staff are made aware if a person has dementia so that their needs can be properly met. In the event of an emergency it is often ambulance staff who will first meet the person with dementia. We currently do not know whether electronic devices allow ambulance staff to reliably record that a person has dementia.

## Methods

We looked at the electronic patient records kept for patients aged 65 or over where an ambulance was sent. We looked at all the records created in a one year period in the South Central region (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Hampshire). The electronic record has many pages and we were interested to know whether staff recorded dementia in the same place as each other. This is important so that this may be easily identified by healthcare staff caring for the patient later.

We wanted to compare our findings with previous studies of paper ambulance records and with hospital records.

## Findings

We found that dementia was recorded in 13.5% of attendances to people aged 65 or over. This was slightly higher where people were aged 75 or over (16.5%). This pattern was in line with the increases in dementia seen with increasing age.

This varied according to the area where a patient was located which may be due to differences in training. People were less likely to be taken to hospital by ambulance if they had a dementia. The likelihood of being taken to hospital also varied according to location. This may be due to differences in out-of-hours care or nursing home care between those areas.

Ambulance staff recorded dementia in a variety of different locations on the electronic record and often recorded it more than once. We found that dementia was recorded in a higher proportion of electronic records than the previous studies of paper records. This may be due to the fact that the many pages in the electronic record serve as prompts to record.

When compared to hospital records we found that the ambulance records of people aged 75 or over identified a lower proportion with dementia. This may be because in-hospital screening happens on the ward and so does not include those patients who attend ED but are then discharged.

## Recommendations

We have recommended improving the electronic recording devices to make recording and reporting of dementia easier. Staff will require training in order to make this system more reliable.

## Further information

Link to abstract: <https://doi.org/10.29045/14784726.2018.03.2.4.10>

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Nil

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