

Time for Dementia

Background

Traditionally, medical and healthcare students have gained experience with various patient groups through multiple, short-term placements during their undergraduate training. However, there are concerns that this style of training does not best promote the attitudes, knowledge and skills needed to care for people who may have long term health problems, including those affected by dementia.

In light of this, the Time for Dementia Programme was developed. In this programme students are given the unique opportunity of getting to know a person with dementia and a family carer, outside the clinical setting. Since 2014 the programme has been a mandatory part of the undergraduate curriculum for medical students at Brighton and Sussex Medical School and nursing and paramedic students at the University of Surrey. The programme has now expanded to University of Brighton and University of Exeter for nursing, physiotherapy, and medical imaging students.

Who can take part?

Anyone with a diagnosis of dementia, regardless of type or stage of dementia can take part in Time for Dementia with their carer or family member or friend. Time for Dementia provides an opportunity for students to learn the different perspectives of both living with dementia and caring for someone with the condition.

What does it involve?

Time for Dementia take place in one of two ways.

The first, is face to face visits. This involves a member of the Alzheimer's Society team coming to visit you at home to talk you through the programme and gather some information from you. You will be paired with two students who will visit you at home up to 6 times over the next two years. You will hear from one of our universities with the details of your students, the students will then contact you to organise each visit, at a time convenient for you. During these visits, students will discuss what it is like to live with dementia. The visits will last 1-2 hours, and it is expected that the same two students will visit you over the two years.

The second is virtual visits. This involves a member of the Alzheimer's Society team having a video conference meeting with you to discuss the programme and tell you more about involvement. The virtual visits are held on MS Teams or Zoom with groups of 8-12 students facilitated by a member of the Time for Dementia team. These are usually held 3 times over the year, about once per term for the students. There is no need to live near the participating university.

What if I change my mind about taking part?

You can withdraw from the Time for Dementia Programme at any time. Apart from the time involved in the visits you will have no other responsibilities. We will keep in touch with you throughout the programme to let you know of any events should you wish to get involved.

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What do the students want to learn?

Students will visit you to learn more about what it is like to live with a diagnosis of dementia or to care for someone with the condition. Students will be asked to create a report or reflection about their experiences during the visits, which will be anonymous. This is purely a learning exercise designed to assess the students' observational and writing skills, and as such the only person to see it will be the person who marks it. Students will not be able to give you any medical advice or care.

Our research shows that taking part in Time for Dementia improves students' knowledge and attitudes towards dementia as well as an improvement of person-centred care to patients affected dementia.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Through your participation in the Time for Dementia Programme you will help us to provide students with a long-term experience of what it is like to live with dementia. Sharing your experiences may influence the way they work with people affected by dementia in the future.

Our research with families suggests that people with dementia and carers gain meaning and satisfaction from taking part in Time for Dementia and that student visits are enjoyable and beneficial to both the person with dementia and their carer.

Contact Details

If you have any questions about the Time for Dementia Programme, please contact:

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