



Defeating Dementia: Progress and challenges on the road to 2025

Meaningful Dementia Friendly Initiatives

Background

Dementia will not be tackled by improvements in our health and care systems alone. All of our communities and the businesses, public and voluntary bodies within them need to become more 'dementia friendly'. That way people will be able to live better with the disease for longer, improving quality of life and reducing the dependence on expensive hospitalization and care home living.

We are three organisations from the countries that are in the forefront of establishing dementia friendly initiatives – Japan, USA and UK. We work in partnership with others in our countries to advance these initiatives as well as collaborating with the WHO on wider application.

The challenge

The World Dementia Council report to the Global Summit in December 2018 states: *"WHO has created a toolkit to launch in 2019 to support the development of dementia friendly initiatives and set an ambition that 50% of countries by 2025 have at least one dementia friendly initiative. Anecdotally, these dementia friendly initiatives appear to raise awareness and make life in the community easier for people with dementia. However, it is imperative that a rigorous, scientifically-sound evidence base be created. Not only will evidence of effectiveness help spread the initiatives, it will help highlight which elements and strategies are most effective and increase the likelihood of local funding to provide ongoing sustainability."*

In many countries, but particularly the US, UK and Japan, there has been a development of dementia friendly initiatives. This has included raising the awareness of individuals through 'Dementia Friends' programs and the development of 'Dementia Friendly Communities' and sector guidance to support businesses to be more supportive of customers and employees who are affected by dementia.

Dementia friendly initiatives have begun as grassroots initiatives, some led by civil society, some by private sector organizations and some with government support. Many programmes around the world have different elements. The energy and variety of the initiatives is one of its challenge and that, and the active participation of people who have dementia, is an indication of how they are valued and have impact. Nonetheless a common challenge is being able to evidence the impact of the programmes and share learning internationally.

Our proposal

As three organisations closely involved and committed to improved societal engagement on dementia, we are proposing to conduct a review in 2019 to help identify what are the components of meaningful dementia friendly communities and by what measures can we evaluate their impact.

The intention is not to stifle innovation nor produce a single template of how to do it (the WHO forthcoming toolkit will provide key support to Member Nations looking to develop dementia friendly

communities). But our organizations are uniquely placed to bring together policy and evidence that will help others develop dementia friendly communities and help our own organizations and partners deliver and support programmes in our own nations. We can identify where international initiatives, for example across business sectors, can drive forward creating a dementia friendly world.

Methodology

Our review will look at:

- Characteristics of dementia friendly initiatives
- Engagement with people affected by dementia
- Resource requirements for successful initiatives
- Opportunities for trans-national initiatives
- Existing standards and guidelines
- Existing evaluations and impact measurements
- Inter-relationships with age-friendly programs

Engagement

The review will be supported by a Reference Panel made up of representatives from:

- International Community
- Governments
- Business Community
- Research Community

In addition to a desktop review, the work will use existing events through 2019 to engage with stakeholders and gain from their insight. These events could include:

- Dementia X Conference in Stockholm
- Global Coalition on Aging Conference in Helsinki
- AARP Conference in Washington DC
- Alzheimer's Society Conference in London
- EU Joint Action Plan Work Package on Dementia Friendly Communities (UK, Greece, Bulgaria, Italy)
- World Health Assembly
- G20 Finance and Aging Meeting in Japan
- Financial Times/Nikkei Conference in London

Results

The review would report to the World Dementia Council towards the end of 2019. It would include recommendations on what further action is needed to ensure that dementia friendly initiatives are meaningful and have real impact on the lives of people affected by dementia not just in higher income but also low and middle income countries.

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