

The use of restrictive practices in the care of people living with dementia in hospital

Submission date 25/08/2022	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered
		<input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Registration date 26/08/2022	Overall study status Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited 25/03/2026	Condition category Mental and Behavioural Disorders	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

This study will examine everyday cultures of restrictive practices in the care of people living with dementia (PLWD) during an acute hospital admission in order to understand the nature, rationales, and experiences of PLWD, their families, and ward staff. Data collection will be carried out within nine wards: six acute wards (three general medicine and three older person's care) and three specialist inpatient mental health wards (dementia specialist mental health inpatient wards across trusts in two regions of the UK (Yorkshire and the South East) and health boards in Wales. 30 days of observation will occur in each acute ward alongside 15 days of observation will occur in each mental health ward.

Who can participate?

Ward staff, patients and carers and family members of patients with a diagnosis or query of dementia when admitted to hospital

What does the study involve?

1. Observing routine ward care practices within and across shifts (am/pm) and different staffing structures (weekends/nights), including handovers
2. Shadowing the work of ward staff and wider hospital staff involved in the care of PLWD
3. Observing clinical assessments, team meetings, and where possible discharge and transfer meetings
4. Observing to identify which patients experience restrictive practices, what forms they take, and if there are any individual patients or groups who appear to be excluded, exempt, or experience increased use of these practices
5. Observing the care of PLWD perceived as at higher risk of adverse incident or 'challenging' behaviour
6. Ethnographic interviews (less than 10-minute conversations during ethnographic observation) with ward staff
7. Document analysis of ward records
8. Interviews carried out with PLWD, their care partners and families to explore the recognition, understandings, and experiences of restrictive practices.
9. Follow-up interviews after discharge in the community with PLWD and their family members participating in the ward ethnography and interviews. Analysis will inform the delivery of

evidence-based strategies to support best practice in the care of PLWD at the ward level, including open-access training and NHS service organisational interventions.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

This study is unlikely to directly benefit patient participants (which is explained clearly in the Patient and Family Member Information sheet). This project does, however, give people living with dementia a rare opportunity to contribute to research which may potentially benefit other people living with the condition and their families.

This is an observational study and will carry no direct risks to participants' physical health. No changes to lifestyle are expected, nor any freedom of action. It is possible that in some cases observations may cause distress or discomfort, at which point observations will cease.

Where is the study run from?

University of West London (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

March 2022 to August 2024

Who is funding the study?

National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) (UK)

Who is the main contact?

Andy Northcott, andy.northcott@uwl.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)

Principal investigator

Contact name

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Additional identifiers

Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)

Nil known

Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)

313816

Protocol serial number

CPMS 53197, IRAS 313816

Study information

Scientific Title

Understanding the everyday use of restrictive practices in the care of people living with dementia during a hospital admission: reducing inappropriate use, identifying good practice and alternative approaches to reduce risk and improve care

Study objectives

The aim of this in-depth ethnographic study is to examine everyday cultures of restrictive practices in the care of people living with dementia (PLWD) during an acute hospital admission. It will explore what forms these practices take, the rationales for their use, and the experience of these practices from the perspectives of PLWD, their families, and ward staff. It will identify evidence-based (and alternative) strategies in the care of PLWD that are achievable, safe, and transferrable across care settings. The objectives are to:

1. Provide a detailed examination of the social and organisational context in influencing the everyday care of PLWD to understand the (a) nature of restrictive (and alternative) practices within acute wards (b) circumstances and contexts of use (c) care practices when PLWD are perceived as at risk of 'falls' or 'wandering', or when their behaviour is perceived as 'challenging', 'disruptive' or 'aggressive'.
2. Examine the recognition, understandings, and experiences of restrictive (and alternative) practices during an admission from the perspectives of PLWD and their families.
3. Examine staff perspectives (a) their understandings and recognition of restrictive practices (b) the formal frameworks and informal rationales drawn on to inform the care of PLWD.
4. Translate the findings into evidence-based strategies to support best practice and alternative approaches in the care of PLWD at ward level.

Ethics approval required

Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

Approved 15/07/2022, London - Bromley Research Ethics Committee (Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6PN, UK; +44 (0)207 104 8105; bromley.rec@hra.nhs.uk), ref: 22/LO/0448

Study design

Multi-site ethnographic study

Primary study design

Observational

Study type(s)

Quality of life

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Dementia

Interventions

Ethnography and in-situ interviews about the everyday use of formal and informal restrictive practices across a range of hospital settings known to admit people living with dementia.

Ethnographic data collection will be carried out within nine wards: six acute wards (three general medicine and three older person's care) and three specialist inpatient mental health wards (dementia specialist mental health in-patient wards across trusts in two regions of the UK (Yorkshire and the South East) and health boards in Wales. 30 days of observation will occur in each acute ward alongside 15 days of observation will occur in each mental health ward (n = 225 days of observed practice).

Intervention Type

Other

Primary outcome(s)

1. The visible work of nurses and healthcare assistants involved in delivering everyday care to people living with dementia as staff make decisions relating to the use of restrictive practices during shifts, assessed using ethnographic observation over four hour periods
2. Routine practice and responses when interacting with people living with dementia explored using short ethnographic interviews as care is delivered over four hour periods
3. The potential impacts and consequences of restrictive practice on patient experiences and discharge pathway in the 3 months after discharge, assessed with follow-up interviews with people living with dementia and family carers at monthly intervals

Key secondary outcome(s)

There are no secondary outcome measures

Completion date

31/08/2024

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

Ward staff, patients and carers and family members of patients with a diagnosis or query of dementia when admitted to hospital

Participant type(s)

Carer, Health professional, Patient

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Mixed

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

0

Key exclusion criteria

Patients without a diagnosis or query of dementia will not be included in observations

Date of first enrolment

01/09/2022

Date of final enrolment

31/08/2024

Locations**Countries of recruitment**

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre

Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

2150 Century Way

Thorpe Park

Leeds

England

LS15 8ZB

Sponsor information**Organisation**

University of West London

ROR

<https://ror.org/03e5mzp60>

Funder(s)**Funder type**

Government

Funder Name

National Institute for Health and Care Research

Alternative Name(s)

National Institute for Health Research, NIHR Research, NIHRresearch, NIHR - National Institute for Health Research, NIHR (The National Institute for Health and Care Research), NIHR

Funding Body Type

Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype

National government

Location

United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article		01/03/2026	25/03/2026	Yes	No
HRA research summary			28/06/2023	No	No
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes