

NOVA SCOTIA'S ADULT DAY PROGRAMS

(by District Health Authorities, Fall 2012)

Environmental Design as a Support for Persons with Dementia

Summary of "Assessing the Physical Environment in Adult Day Programs"
(Master of Arts Thesis, 2012)



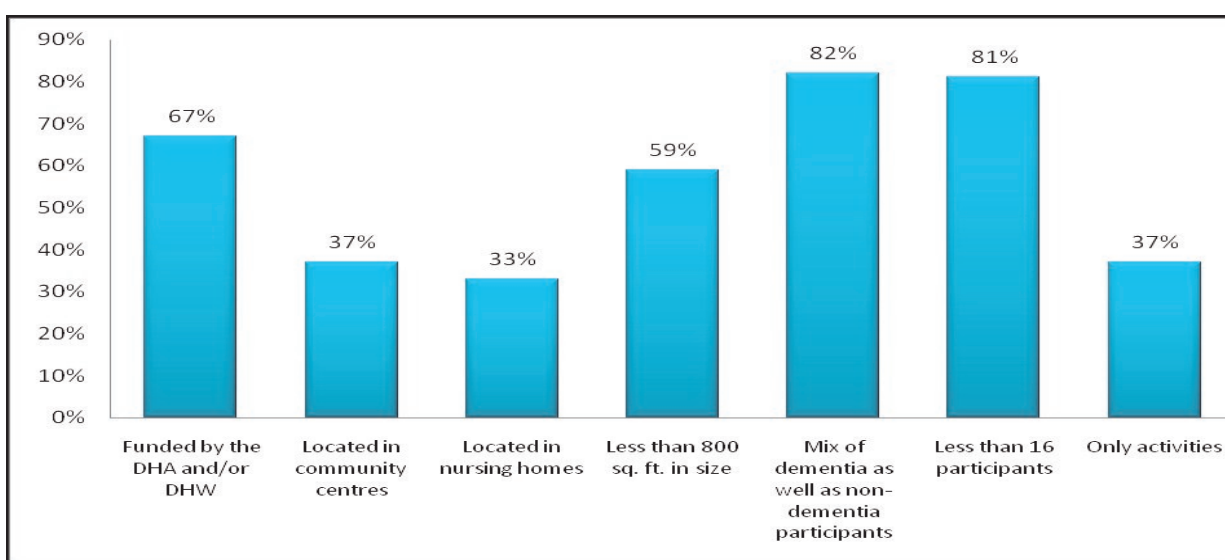
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Introduction and Overview

This research project developed and tested an instrument that measures the presence or absence of environmental design features in adult day programs, which have been found to support the behavioural and psychological needs of persons with dementia. The instrument was used to assess Nova Scotia's adult day program environments in order to provide detailed information about their suitability for the dementia population and to recognize environmental design as a key element in offering community-based services. Representatives from 27 adult day programs* responded to the survey.

Nova Scotia's Adult Day Programs

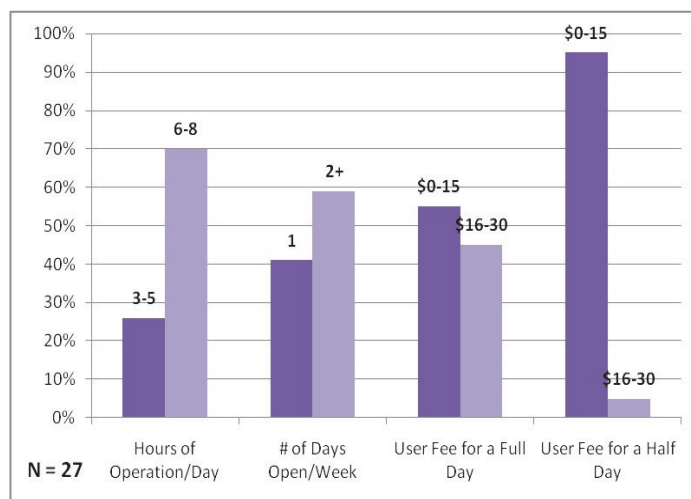


*Adult day programs are defined as community-care services that offer social/recreational activities in a group setting and offer socialization, cognitive stimulation, health monitoring, medication monitoring or administration, personal care, provision of snacks and hot meals, assistance with toileting, health care teaching, transportation, and provision of information.

Why Adult Day Programs?

In Canada almost half of informal caregivers (43%) are between 45 and 54; many balance this role with job and family responsibilities. Adult day programs are beginning to be recognized as a viable and cost-effective respite service for caregivers and their loved ones. Persons with dementia who need constant supervision can attend adult day programs during the day, allowing caregivers the opportunity to fulfill other obligations.

Availability

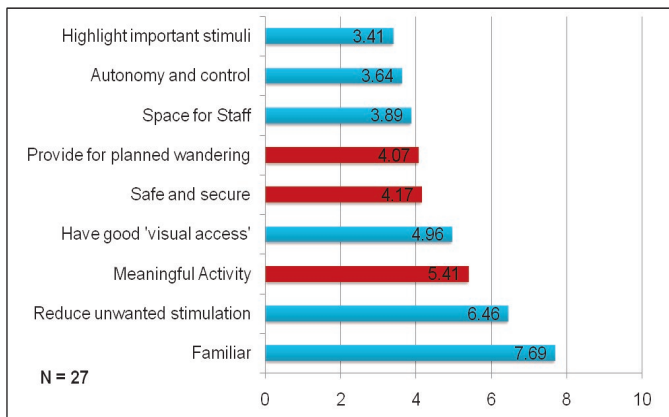


Dementia-Friendly Environments Should...



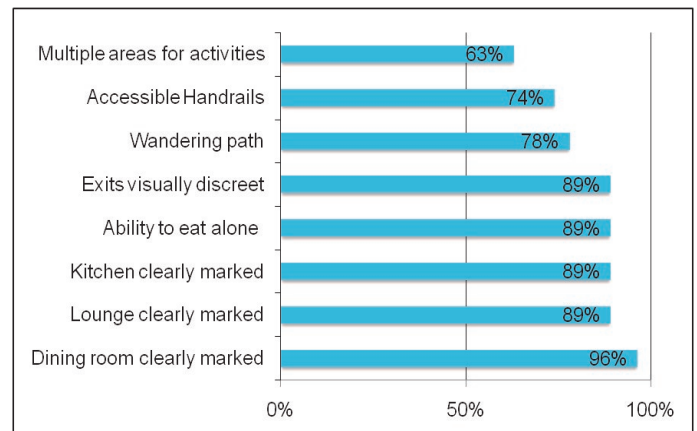
Assessment of Dementia Friendliness

Average score indicating the assessed environmental dementia friendliness
1 (low) to 10 (high) dementia friendliness



Key Design Features of Concern

% of Adult Day Programs deficient in critical design features



Living with Dementia Should Frame Design

There are two distinct ways to conceive of the behaviour of persons with dementia; either as 'abnormal in a normal world' or as relatively normal in an abnormally perceived world.

(Jones & van der Eerden, 2008, p.10)

Relevance of the Findings

The results of the research indicated that adult day programs that were supported with funding by the District Health Authority (DHA) and/or Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) were found to have significantly more environmental design features that provide safety and security, opportunity for meaningful activities, opportunity to function independently and space for the staff, than adult day programs that were not supported with funding by the DHA and/or DHW.

Adult day programs that were open for a full day and operating 2+ days a week were found to have significantly more environmental design features that provide safety and security and opportunity for meaningful activities, good 'visual access' and functional independence within the program for persons with dementia than adult day programs operating 1 day a week; 41% of adult day programs operate 1 day a week. Although the physical environment is a key component in providing quality dementia care, it must be acknowledged that people with dementia do not experience themselves and their physical and social environments as separate. Each part, personal, physical and social, is in a lived relationship to the other, therefore it is important to recognize that many supportive components involved in how supportive the environment is for persons with dementia in adult day programs may not be reflective in the findings.

The challenge to governments is to develop and improve services for people with dementia, focusing on earlier provision of support in the community. This involves allocating resources to community-based services in the continuing care sector in order to increase availability and ensure quality support services. Adult day programs have been found to promote independence and maintain a person's physical and psychosocial well being, as well as that of their caregiver. In addition to practical support, these services also provide people with connections to their community, reducing their social isolation.

While awaiting more effective medical treatments, prevention strategies, and ultimately a cure, improving care and quality of life for those affected by dementia is of critical importance. The findings from this study can be used to inform decision makers about the adult day programs being offered throughout the province, and the importance of acknowledging the design of the environment as a key component in community-based services when considering quality dementia care services.

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