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# Utilising volunteers to deliver person centred care for people with dementia/delirium in an acute setting

**Kaye Ervin**
*University of Melbourne Rural Health Academic Network, Australia*

## Abstract

**Objective:** The primary aim of the project was to recruit and train volunteers to deliver person-centred care for people with dementia/delirium in an acute ward setting. Previous research identifies the risks to people with dementia in acute settings related to limitations in acute care systems and staff capacity. In addition, there is evidence in the literature of carer's dissatisfaction with service delivery. A successful intervention utilising volunteers for people with dementia in acute care demonstrated multiple benefits for staff, patients and their carer's.

**Method:** The project was grounded in action research theory. Staff and families of people with dementia identified that acute ward settings do not have the capacity to adequately care for people with dementia. A researcher worked with staff to facilitate a volunteer program, drafting policies, procedures and guidelines, and driving the recruitment process and implementation using evidence based practice. The project was structured to be sustainable once the researcher had withdrawn. Evaluation of the program was undertaken through qualitative interviews with staff and carers.

**Results:** Ten volunteers were recruited and trained in person centred practices and a program successfully implemented. Staff and families perceived the program to be extremely valuable in ensuring safety and comfort of patients with dementia/delirium in an acute setting.

**Conclusion:** Utilising trained volunteers provides a realistic, evidence based solution to providing high quality care for people with dementia/delirium. With the projected increase of people with dementia, innovative service delivery initiatives, with minimal costs must be facilitated to ensure quality and safety.

## Biography

Kaye Ervin has been a registered nurse for 30 years, predominantly in aged care, where she has held various positions, including nurse unit manager and nurse practitioner candidate. She is located at Cobram District Health, in Victoria Australia as part of the University of Melbourne Rural Health Academic Network. Her research interest is dementia care and she aims to improve the journey for nurses, clients and their families. Her work has been published in numerous peer reviewed journals and presented at international conferences around the world. She is currently working with a screen writer to develop a movie character which accurately portrays the experience of people with dementia.

ervink@humehealth.org.au