



Rapid response teams

DEMENTIA CARE

This evidence theme on rapid response teams is a summary of one of the key topics identified by a scoping review of dementia research.

Key points

- Rapid response teams or services are designed to support people with extreme responsive behaviours in residential aged care facilities.
- Evidence from one systematic review showed that rapid response teams improved multiple client outcomes including behavioural severity, pain, hospital referrals and quality of life for people living with dementia.
- Rapid response teams also improved staff and organisational outcomes such as stress, the need for specialist consultation, staff confidence in supporting and managing responsive behaviours in people living with dementia, organisational culture, and cost-effectiveness.
- Studies that assessed the relationship between rapid response teams and outcomes such as depression and global/mental state found no benefit.

What are rapid response teams?

Rapid response teams are services designed to support people living with dementia who are experiencing extreme responsive behaviours in residential aged care facilities. In Australia, we have Severe Behaviour Response Teams, a mobile workforce of clinical experts, including:

- Nurse practitioners
- Nurses
- Allied health staff
- Specialists. [1]

These services are available to Australian Government-funded approved residential aged care providers and multi-purpose services. Aged care providers can request assistance from these teams to address severe responsive behaviours in people living with dementia.

According to the Australian Government Department of Health, these teams are designed to act quickly and provide expert advice to requesting services. They can:

- Assess the causes of the behaviours.
- Assist care staff until the immediate crisis is resolved.
- Develop a care plan to address behaviours.
- Provide follow-up assistance. [1]

Are rapid response teams effective?

We found one systematic review examining the benefits of rapid response teams. Of the service models reviewed, none were directly comparable to the Severe Behaviour Response Teams when it came to scale, client group, mode of delivery, acuity of risk and operational settings. [2] However, five components were common to each: 'clearly defined parameters and processes; provision of clinical expertise and knowledge translation activities; person-centred philosophy; relationship-oriented approach to stakeholders; and generalisable and sustainable outcomes'. [2]

Many studies reported benefits of rapid response teams. Outcomes for people living with dementia included reduced:

- Severity of behaviours
- Hospital referrals
- Agitation
- Pain
- Verbally disruptive behaviour
- Neuropsychiatric symptoms
- Re-hospitalisation
- Minor depressive symptoms
- Grief reactions
- Admissions to acute care
- Use of anti-psychotics. [2]

Rapid response teams also improved:

- Quality of life
- Satisfaction with service
- Prevention of placement breakdown. [2]

For people living with dementia, there was no clear evidence of benefit for:

- Depression
- Mental or global state. [2]

This is because studies assessed the relationship between rapid response teams and these outcomes, but no benefit was reported.

Rapid response teams were also associated with benefits for staff and organisations. These benefits include reduced:

- Stress/distress
- Need for specialist consultation. [2]

Rapid response teams also improved:

- Confidence in supporting and managing behaviours in people living with dementia
- Knowledge of mental health
- Satisfaction among facility management
- Organisational culture
- Satisfaction with treatment team and specialist support
- Streamlining of processes
- Rapport with community psychiatric nurses
- Compliance in using protocols/guidelines
- Cost-effectiveness. [2]

The authors of the review did not discuss the methodological limitations of the included studies.

What can an individual do?

- Be familiar with rapid response teams and how they may influence outcomes for people living with dementia.
- Refer/escalate any care concerns you may have for a person living with dementia.

What can the organisation do?

- Be familiar with rapid response teams and when to engage their services.
- Encourage and support staff to come forward with any care concerns they may have for a person living with dementia.

References

1. Australian Government Department of Health. Severe Behaviour Response Teams (SBRT) [Internet]. 2022 [cited 2023 Jun 29]. Available from: www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/severe-behaviour-response-teams-sbirt
2. Westera A, Fildes D, Grootemaat P, Gordon R. Rapid response teams to support dementia care in Australian aged care homes: Review of the evidence. *Australas J Ageing*. 2020;39(3):178-92.

Cite as: ARIIA Knowledge & Implementation Hub. Rapid response teams: Dementia care. Evidence Theme. Adelaide, SA: ARIIA; 2022 [updated 2023 Jul].

www.ariia.org.au

For more information email ariia@ariia.org.au or call 08 7421 9134

ARIIA - Level 2, Tonsley Hub, South Rd, Tonsley SA 5042

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