Development of a resource for police on best practice in search for missing older adults with dementia

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Body of missing senior discovered in wooded area in southwest Calgary

Two years after Shin Noh disappeared, Coquitlalm family seeks answers

Rising rate of missing dementia patients challenges police forces

How did an 83-year-old man with dementia survive for five days without food, medication?

Missing 86-year-old Edmonton man returns home: police

Police looking for help finding missing 84-year-old man

Vancouver Police locate missing elderly man with dementia
**Figure 1. Scholarly reviewed literature article search results**

- **Identification**
  - Records identified through database searching (n = 852)
  - Additional records identified through other sources (n = 2)

- **Screening**
  - Records after duplicates removed (n = 845)

- **Eligibility**
  - Records screened (n = 295)
  - Records excluded (n = 253)

- **Included**
  - Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n = 42)
  - Studies included in qualitative synthesis (n = 16)
  - 26 articles excluded by external review for the following reasons (n):
    - Did not include best police practices (5)
    - Did not include best police practices specifically to persons with dementia (19)
    - Did not include persons with dementia (1)
Figure 2. Number of included strategies/best police practices per country of origin. Scholarly literature (black bars) and grey literature (grey bars).
Figure 3. Number of publications addressing strategies for missing persons with dementia. Scholarly literature (black bars) and grey literature (grey bars).
Best practice type

**Figure 4.** Number of strategies/best police practices per strategy type. Scholarly literature (black bars) and grey literature (grey bars) (n = 50)
• 7 demonstrated the observed basic principles for applied research and development (PRL1), 7 were validated in relevant environments (PRL5), 1 was in demonstration or pilot phase (PRL6), and 1 contained a strategy where the system is complete and qualified (PRL 8)

• Effectiveness and/or usability testing was found in only 5 (33%) of the included studies

• 5/16 (33%) showed advantages of using the included strategies, however level of scientific evidence remains low

• Only 3 included studies addressed ethical concerns such as balance between safety and autonomy when using GPS devices
METHODS

• One-on-one phone interviews with paramedics, search and rescue, police, and media relations officers were conducted.

• Questions included:
  1) What strategies are used in searches for missing persons with dementia?
  2) What factors influenced their choice in the listed strategy?
  3) What percentage of missing persons calls are older adults with dementia?
  4) What gaps in practice are present?

• Directed content analysis was used (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005)
Table 1. Participant Characteristics (n = 30)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provincial Region</th>
<th>Department/Organization</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>Elliot Lake</td>
<td>SAR (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Media (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Shore</td>
<td>SAR (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>Oxford County</td>
<td>SAR (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sarnia</td>
<td>SAR (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aurora</td>
<td>Media (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elgin</td>
<td>Media (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>SAR (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guelph</td>
<td>Media (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Media (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Durham</td>
<td>SAR (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barrie</td>
<td>SAR (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Media (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orillia</td>
<td>SAR (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>York</td>
<td>SAR (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Paramedic (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>SAR (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Media (1)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kingston</td>
<td>SAR (1)</td>
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<td>Toronto</td>
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<td>SAR (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Media (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>OSARVA</td>
<td>SAR (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>MedicAlert</td>
<td>Emergency Response Specialist (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 1.** Best practices used by police
Figure 2. Where participants learned of their existing best police practices
Table 2. Percentage and trend of missing persons calls that are persons with dementia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Range (% of missing persons calls)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Trend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>30-50</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Drastic increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>30-50</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Steadily increasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Central</td>
<td>27-33</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>&gt;1% increase per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Steadily increasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>30-50</td>
<td>2-3 calls/ 12 hour shift</td>
<td>Increased. One department has doubled within the last 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5-7 calls/ 24 hours</td>
<td>Increased slightly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BEST PRACTICES AND TIPPING POINTS

• **Paramedics:** present state of education is limited forcing them to lean on police to determine the steps they need to follow

• **Media releases:**
  1) Processes – SOPs, differences between OPP and other police services
  2) Social media – most common and effective method to alert the public (Twitter)
  3) Disclosure of dementia – some will use the term but only if have received consent from the family

• **Tipping point:**
  1) Increasing # of Canadians with dementia
  2) Experienced influx in the # of calls involving persons with dementia
  3) A particular missing person case
  4) Awareness of the urgency to find this population as soon as possible
INFLUENCE OF RISK, CULTURE AND GEOGRAPHY

- *Risk* – weather, water, time and ability to care for themselves
- *Culture* – language barriers, experiences with police, culturally-based stigmas
- *Geography* – environment on utilization of resources
GAPS IN PRACTICE

• **Education and awareness** – when to call the police, care facilities unable to give police information; lack of basic SAR training and education on dementia; wider education to the public

• **Proactive strategies** – need for more such as vulnerable persons registries; police know these will reduce the strain placed on existing resources

• **Available resources** – limited officers in media or volunteer SAR teams in certain jurisdictions

• **Funding** – need to find ways of reducing costs of certain proactive strategies
REGIONAL FORUMS
RESOURCE LAUNCH

FINDING Your Way
For people with dementia, every step counts.

LIVING SAFELY WITH DEMENTIA | BUILDING SAFE COMMUNITIES | ONLINE LEARNING | LOCATING TECHNOLOGY | RESOURCES

First Responder Information Centre
Discover materials, information, and resources developed by the Rapid Response Working Group to help first responders effectively conduct searches for missing people living with dementia.

Dementia Training ➔ Communication Tips ➔ Search Programs ➔

findingyourwayontario.ca

Search Programs
Find people living with dementia faster
Are you aware of the various search programs that police forces and other first responder units can enroll in? These programs can aid in reducing and responding to missing person events for people living with dementia.

Dementia & Communication Tips
Learn about dementia and how to communicate with a person living with dementia
People living with dementia may communicate differently than people without cognitive impairments. It is important to know how their communication may be affected and how you can best communicate with them.

Dementia Training
People living with dementia behave differently when they are lost
In order to search for and better assist people living with dementia, you should be aware of how the disease affects people and their behaviours. Learn where you can access helpful training and education.

Reuniting Families
Help families prepare for the return and prevent possible recurrence
Learn how first responders can help the family after the person goes missing and once they’re safely returned. Help arm the family with the resources they need to prevent this from happening again.

Société Alzheimer Society
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