

A&E attendance for people dying with dementia: common and increasing

Key Findings

- The majority of people with dementia (78.6%) attend Accident & Emergency (A&E) at least once in their last year of life.
- A&E attendance becomes more common the closer people are to death: 44.5% of people with dementia had at least one A&E attendance in their last month of life; 20.9% had at least one A&E attendance in their last week of life.
- People who live in care homes have fewer A&E attendances in their last year of life, which may be because plans were put in place to avoid this.
- A&E attendance has increased over time, by 62% over five years, indicating increasing reliance on emergency care for people dying with dementia.

Policy recommendations

- Policy makers must consider a broader range of indicators of the quality of end-of-life care, taking into account not just where a person dies but the care they receive during the preceding months.
- Investment in community care, including care homes, is likely to be key to avoiding unplanned A&E attendance in the last months of life.

Reference this study as:

Sleeman KE, Perera G, Stewart R, Higginson IJ. Predictors of emergency department attendance by people with dementia in their last year of life: Retrospective cohort study using linked clinical and administrative data. *Alzheimer's and Dementia* 2017.

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For information on the SLAM BRC visit <http://www.maudsleybrc.nihr.ac.uk/facilities/clinical-record-interactive-search-cris/>

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What we know



Dementia is now the most common cause of death in England, with numbers projected to rise from 59,199 to 219,409 deaths per year by 2040.



Accident and Emergency (A&E) visits for people who are approaching the end-of-life can be distressing for patients and families and challenging for staff, and are considered potentially preventable in a high proportion of cases.



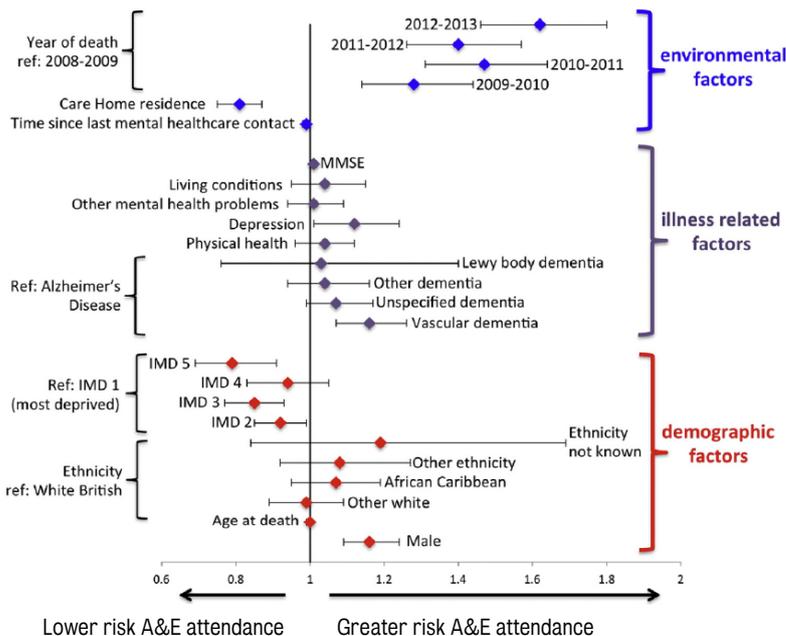
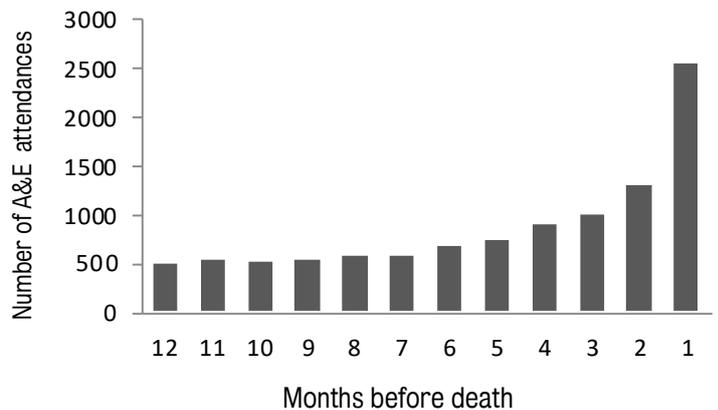
Little is known about the frequency with which people with dementia visit A&E in their last year of life, or the factors that might help prevent these.

What we did

We used the NIHR Maudsley Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) Clinical Record Interactive Search (CRIS) database linked to Hospital Episodes Statistics from NHS Digital to provide information on A&E use among people with dementia in their last year of life.

What we found

- We identified 4,867 people who had a diagnosis of dementia and who died over a five-year period (2008-2013).
- 78.6% had one or more A&E visit in their last year of life.
- A&E attendance is more common closer to death: 24.6% of all A&E attendances occurred in the last month of life.
- A&E attendance in the final month of life were more likely to be emergencies, by ambulance, and to be out of hours, suggesting that they are precipitated by a crisis.



- Demographic, illness-related and environmental factors were found to be associated with A&E attendance.
- A&E attendance was **more** common for men, for people with vascular dementia (compared to Alzheimer's), and for people with less severe cognitive impairment.
- A&E attendance was **less** common for people who lived in less deprived areas, and those who lived in care homes.
- A&E attendance became **more** common over time.