SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA TO DIE AT HOME IN IRELAND

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Background: The Irish National Dementia Strategy (2014) highlights the need for early diagnosis and establishing a dementia friendly Ireland to enable people with dementia to live well in their communities. However the needs of people with advanced dementia are not often discussed and little is known about what supports people with dementia need to enable them to live well and die well in their own homes.

This study explores the components of care which support a person with dementia who accessed a national night nursing service to die at home.

Methods: A mixed methods approach was used. Quantitative data from a national night nursing service (which supports people with dementia to die at home) was accessed. Supplementary information from specialist palliative care teams (SPCT) was gathered for 52 dementia referrals to the night nursing service between June and December 2015. Data retrieved was analysed. Findings were compared against the literature available on people with dementia who are enabled to die at home.

Results: Of the 4,200 people with dementia who die in Ireland every year 5% (210) die at home. The availability of family/friend to provide care to a person with dementia appears to be a key determinant to people with dementia dying at home. Having a supportive GP available to do weekly home visit was important for 63% of the sample. The decision to stay at home was made by the person with dementia or their families in over 50% of the sample. The majority of the sample were referred to SPCT in their last week(s) of life.

Conclusion: Along with more focus on advance care planning the biggest enabler to address improvements in this area will be investment in primary care and specialist services to enable more people with dementia die well at home.