

Your name

Olivia Robinson

Your PhD Title

Understanding the care and support needs of nursing home residents with dementia and comorbid cancer – to inform provision of high-quality person-centred care for this group

Your mode of study FT/PT

Full-Time

Your supervisory team

Dr Laura Ashley; Professor Claire Surr; Dr Darren Hill

Background to your PhD

Research into the prevalence of comorbid dementia and cancer is limited, a systematic review conducted by Hopkinson, Milton, King and Edwards (2016) reviewed cancer treatment and outcomes in people with dementia and found that compared to other cancer patients, those with dementia were diagnosed at a later stage, receive less treatments, were at greater risk of treatment complications and had poor survival.

There are an estimated 70% of care home residents that have dementia and 10-15% with a cancer diagnosis (Rodin, 2008). Research on the care of residents with dementia or cancer singly shows that care homes can frequently struggle to meet the clinical and psychosocial needs and provide high-quality holistic person-centred care to residents with these conditions. In addition to this, it was found that those with co-existing dementia and cancer had higher rates of emergency department visits, hospitalisations, and intensive care unit use than those with dementia only or cancer only (Monroe, Carter, Feldt, Tolley & Cowan, 2012). However, there is very little research that in UK care home settings, looking at the care/support needs of people living with dementia and comorbid cancer.

The aims and objectives of the PhD

This study aims to investigate the experiences and care needs of nursing home residents with comorbid cancer and dementia. It is funded by the Abbeyfield Research Foundation. It will achieve this through meeting the following objectives.

- 1) To conduct a literature, review to determine the current knowledge gaps on the experiences, care and support needs of residents with multi-morbidities living in care homes.
- 2) To conduct a qualitative interview study from the perspective of all three arms of the care triad, by obtaining and synthesising the views of residents with dementia and comorbid cancer, carers, and nursing home staff.
- 3) To conduct ethnographic observations of care from all three arms of the triad to help understand care experiences and processes through getting close to the contexts of care where practice unfolds.
- 4) To identify priority areas and outcomes for future interventions which will aim to support and improve provision and delivery of high-quality person-centred care for residents with dementia and comorbid cancer in nursing homes.

Your study design and methods

Study 1: A literature review will be conducted focusing on the gaps of research looking at the care and support needs of residents with multi-morbidities living in care homes.

Study 2: The qualitative study which aims to recruit 4-6 different nursing homes. This study will involve semi-structured interviews, which will be conducted individually and/or in pairs/small groups. Interviews will be carried out in nursing home settings. It will aim to interview 5-10 nursing home residents with dementia and comorbid cancer, 10 current of former carers of residents, and 10 nursing home staff who have cared for residents with both conditions.

Study 3: Ethnographic care observations and conversations will be conducted. This will aim to review the experiences and care of 5-10 nursing home residents with dementia and comorbid cancer (8-16 hours per resident), plus targeted observations of good and problematic processes and practice (35-50 hours) (approx. 150 hours of observation in total). Both interviews and observations will be analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

What the contribution to knowledge will be

This will be the first research in a UK nursing home setting which will examine and understand the care experiences and needs of residents with dementia and comorbid cancer. Additionally, this research will act as a vital foundation step to identifying and developing interventions to improved care for this particular group.

How you plan to disseminate the PhD

I plan to disseminate my findings to appropriate peer-reviewed journals (for example: psychology & Health; Psycho-oncology). I also intend to present my lay summaries of findings to Abbeyfield Research Foundation and potentially other relevant charities/networks. I will also present findings at appropriate academic conferences such as British Psychosocial Oncology Society and BPS Division of Health Psychology.