

Dementia Care in Times of Corona

People with dementia are particularly vulnerable in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The close physical contact with caregivers and the poor adherence to safeguarding measures (eg, social distancing, wearing masks) and hygienic practices (eg, washing hands) expose them to a higher risk of infection by SARS-CoV-2.ⁱ As recommended by international dementia experts and Alzheimer's Disease International, special support for people living with dementia and their carers is needed worldwide.ⁱⁱ

How the pandemic influenced dementia

The COVID-19 pandemic creates particular problems for people living with dementia and their carers, particularly in times of lock-down:

- They are in the high-risk age group for catching the infection
- They often have comorbid conditions which makes it more difficult for them to deal with the virus and may increase mortality
- They need continuous care provision, activity and participation
- They are vulnerable to the effects of inactivity and social isolation
- It is much more difficult for people living with dementia to understand and adjust to the changes and medical precautions due to the pandemic.
- They are unable to visit their doctor and benefit from physical therapy, speech and language, or occupational therapy
- Their carers cannot participate in support group meetings

technologies to provide healthcare when participants are separated by distance or time. Participants include physicians, other qualified health care professionals, and additional members of the healthcare team connected virtually with patients, family members, and other care providers. **Virtual meetings** are organised for supporting the carers of persons with dementia.

COVID-19 as a driver for innovation – remaining solutions after pandemic

Independently of the current COVID 19 pandemic, the application of technological devices and assistive technology in dementia care may lead to several advantages such as: improving access and quality of care, providing services to persons with dementia coming from rural communities, or

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As a consequence of these findings and to facilitate learning from the experience, the INDEED project group has added a new chapter to the online learning platform, dedicated to dementia care in times of corona. Screenshots of this new section are shown on this factsheet.



Solutions found

Telehealth and **assistive technology** are important strategies to maintain high-quality dementia care during the pandemic. **Telehealth** or virtual care uses digital information and telecommunication

Fields of application for telehealth and assistive technology:

- Information and communication
- Assessment and diagnosis
- Cognitive stimulation
- Entertainment
- Physical exercise
- Occupational therapy
- Speech and language therapy
- Treatment monitoring
- Caregiver support
- Interprofessional networking

supporting caregivers. Some of these smart solutions for delivering treatment will probably remain after the pandemic as an add-on to the traditional formats or as independent strategies.

- The education of carers and persons with dementia could continue to be delivered through online platforms, social media, or chats, as a complement of face-to-face visits.
- Clinical visits for the adjustment and monitoring of treatment could be performed by telemedicine, especially for persons with dementia who live far away from the hospital or office.
- Some non – pharmacological interventions could continue to be performed in an online format and replace face-to-face interventions.

Remaining solutions after pandemic

Real-time communication via telephone or computer / internet.

Examples: virtual physician visits, virtual carer support groups.

Pre-produced information delivered through cloud or surface mail.

Examples: Training instructions, educational materials.

Delegation of interventions to staff who have access to people with dementia in times of lockdown.

Examples: Occupational therapy



UNDERSTANDING DEMENTIA | RECOGNISING DEMENTIA | TREATING DEMENTIA | DEMENTIA IN CORONA TIMES
 Challenges of COVID-19 and solutions | Sustainable gains for dementia care

How were the CORONA challenges met?

Introducing alternative ways of service delivery and assistance by volunteers helped Mr and Ms Horvat cope with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information on the INDEED project, please contact us at contact.indeed.project@gmail.com

INDEED project offers a freely available online course about dementia which now includes dedicated chapters about Corona in the CAMPUS and CONNECT sections:

<https://indeed-project.eu/campus/dementia-in-corona-times/>
<https://indeed-project.eu/connect/collaboration-in-corona-times/>

Dealing with crisis has also influenced service provision from a business perspective. Strategies on how to manage the consequences of the pandemic from a business perspective are featured in the additional COACH chapter:

<https://indeed-project.eu/coach/business-plan-development/innovation-crisis/>

ⁱ ([Marco Canevelli](#),^{1,2} [Luigi Palmieri](#),³ [Valeria Raparelli](#),⁴ [Cinzia Lo Noce](#),³ [Elisa Colaizzo](#),⁵ [Dorina Tiple](#),⁵ [Luana Vaiarella](#),⁵ [Nicola Vanacore](#),² [Silvio Brusaferrò](#),⁶ [Graziano Onder](#),³ and the Italian National Institute of Health COVID-19 Mortality Group*
 Prevalence and clinical correlates of dementia among COVID-19-related deaths in Italy)
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7666428/>
ⁱⁱ ([Huali Wang](#),^{a,b} [Tao Li](#),^{a,b} [Paola Barbarino](#),^c [Serge Gauthier](#),^d [Henry Brodaty](#),^e [José Luis Molinuevo](#),^f [Hengge Xie](#),^g [Yongan Sun](#),^h [Enyan Yu](#),ⁱ [Yanqing Tang](#),^j [Wendy Weidner](#),^c and [Xin Yu](#),^{a,b} - Dementia care during COVID-19, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7146671/>