



**Exploring patient navigation for people
with dementia, their caregivers, and
the care team in Canada:**
An environmental scan report



**Excellence
en santé**
Canada



**Centre for Research
in Integrated Care**



Executive summary

We conducted an environmental scan of patient navigation programs for people with dementia, their caregivers, and/or their care team across Canada. To conduct an environmental scan, you gather information from the external and internal environments to identify trends and issues to inform decision-making and future actions for an organization or on a particular topic. You can use an environmental scan to inform your organization's goals and strategies.

The following is a summary of our environmental scan results, which can be accessed in full when it is published.

We asked:

- 1) What patient navigation programs exist in Canada that support the navigational needs of people with dementia, their caregivers, and/or the care team?
- 2) Where in Canada are the navigation programs located?
- 3) What are the structures and functions of the navigation programs?

Surveys distributed to provincial governments and other relevant organizations: **34**

Surveys completed and returned: 11

Demographics

We received responses from dementia navigation programs across six provinces:

- Three in Alberta
- Three in British Columbia
- One in New Brunswick
- Three in Ontario
- One in Prince Edward Island
- One in Saskatchewan

Eight organizations were non-profit, two were government run programs, and one was a private program. Six of the programs were from provincial Alzheimer Societies' First Link programs.

Service Characteristics

Program modes of delivery, schedules, team compositions, service languages, and services provided all vary. Only one program has an eligibility criterion of 65 years and older.

Programs have multiple service delivery methods, with telephone and web-based being the most common. Other methods include face-to-face in an office, clinic, or a client's home. Nine programs offer in-person services at-home, while one program provides in-person services in a clinical setting exclusively. One program offers only web-based services.

Program schedules vary. The majority of programs report being open weekdays Monday to Friday. Two organizations reported being open on weekday evenings and two programs are open on Saturdays. The remaining programs are open at least eight hours per day without specifying which days. Seven programs offer services in multiple languages, including French, Punjabi, Cantonese, Mandarin, Arabic, and Spanish. Two programs have translator services available.

Six organizations have navigator(s) as part of an integrated team. The most common team members are social workers and nurses, followed by primary care providers, occupational therapists, psychologists, and geriatricians.

For all programs, families and caregivers learn about the navigation program from their care provider. They also learn about programs by word of mouth and from advertisements.

The two most common services all programs provide are emotional support for clients and caregivers and facilitating linkages to other community social supports. Other services include (among others):

- Building capacity of caregivers by providing advice and support
- Identifying barriers and assist client/caregiver in addressing these barriers
- Providing tailored education and support to families and caregivers

Providing tailored education includes sharing additional community resources and supports; advance care planning; disease and disease progression information; and care for the caregiver.

Navigator Title, Qualifications, Role, and Caseload

Navigator titles, qualifications, role, and method of counting caseload vary, with variation even amongst the different Alzheimer Society First Link programs. Navigator titles include coordinator, case manager, navigator, social worker, seniors' advisor, and dementia care coach. All are paid.

Most positions require an academic degree. The most common degree is social work, followed by a health-related field generally, and nursing specifically. Five programs require no specific qualifications. However, all programs reported having a training component for the navigators.

Most organizations reported more than one navigator. Only two programs reported having one navigator. Of the eleven programs, seven had full-time navigators, while one program had part-time navigators. The rest had a combination of full and part-time navigators.

Across programs, there appears to be no standard way to count caseload. Navigator caseloads are measured in several ways, including number of follow-ups, number of referrals, patients per month, and caseload number.

Program Evaluation

Most of the programs reported either having an evaluation completed or an evaluation in progress. Two organizations did not report an evaluation, and one organization indicated that they had conducted an evaluation, but not recently.

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this environmental scan was to identify and describe navigation programs in Canada for persons with dementia, their caregivers, and care teams. The included programs facilitate access by delivering navigational services in multiple ways, including by telephone, in-person, or via web-based services. Organizations offer a similar suite of services, the most common being to provide emotional support to clients/caregivers; facilitate linkages to other community social supports; identify barriers; build capacity of caregivers; assess client/caregiver needs; and provide tailored education and support.

Titles for the navigator positions vary and all are paid positions (as opposed to volunteer positions). Social workers and registered nurses are the most common types of professional backgrounds for the navigator positions. Over half of the organizations reported that the navigator works as part of an integrated team. The measurement of caseloads varies widely across organizations. The findings from this scan provide contextual information to support the development and implementation of patient navigation programs for people with dementia, their caregivers, as well as the care team.