

## Current Understanding of Dementia Assessment and Management by Clinical Physiotherapists: A Narrative Review

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### Abstract

Dementia is a progressive neurological condition affecting a growing number of individuals worldwide. However, the knowledge of clinical physiotherapists regarding dementia assessment and management is not well understood. This narrative review aims to comprehensively understand the current state of knowledge among clinical physiotherapists in this area. A thorough search across four electronic databases identified 337 articles, with 13 articles included for analysis. Key themes emerged, revealing a lack of understanding among clinical physiotherapists regarding different types of dementia and their underlying causes. Inadequate assessment of functional abilities and limited knowledge of non-pharmacological interventions for dementia were also observed. Collaboration with other healthcare professionals was identified as critical. This narrative review highlights the knowledge gaps among clinical physiotherapists in dementia assessment and management. Continuous education, collaboration, and evidence-based practice are crucial for addressing these gaps and improving the care provided by clinical physiotherapists to individuals with dementia.

**KEYWORDS:** Dementia, Electronic databases, Functional abilities, Non-pharmacological, Physiotherapists, Professionals

### Introduction

Dementia is a debilitating condition that affects cognitive and functional abilities. <sup>[1]</sup> With the projected increase in the number of people with dementia, clinical physiotherapists play a crucial role in its management. However, the knowledge and understanding of clinical physiotherapists regarding dementia are not well understood. <sup>[2-4]</sup> This narrative review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge among clinical physiotherapists regarding dementia assessment and management.

### Methods:

A systematic literature search was conducted across prominent databases including PubMed, Google Scholar, Scopus, and Cochrane Library. The search encompassed relevant terms such as "dementia," "Alzheimer's disease," "older adults", "cognitive impairment," "physiotherapy," "physical therapy," "rehabilitation," "assessment," and "management." A total of 337 articles were initially identified through the search process. The inclusion criteria comprised articles published in English between 2013 and 2023 that specifically addressed the knowledge and understanding of dementia among healthcare workers including clinical physiotherapists. After applying the inclusion criteria, 13 articles were selected for analysis (Table I).

### Results & discussion:

The review identified several key themes related to dementia assessment and management by clinical physiotherapists. Firstly, there was a lack of understanding among clinical physiotherapists regarding the various types of dementia and their underlying causes. This lack of understanding could lead to inappropriate treatment approaches and suboptimal outcomes for patients. Clinical physiotherapists need comprehensive knowledge of the different types of dementia to accurately assess and manage patients. <sup>[1,4,6]</sup>

Moreover, the review found that clinical physiotherapists often focus on treating the physical symptoms of dementia without fully assessing the functional abilities of patients. Inadequate assessment of functional abilities can result in treatments that do not address specific needs, push patients beyond their limits, and underestimate their potential for improvement. <sup>[7-9]</sup>

Furthermore, non-pharmacological interventions for dementia management, such as exercise and cognitive stimulation, were found to be effective. However, clinical physiotherapists often lack sufficient knowledge and training in these interventions, limiting the range of treatment options available to patients. <sup>[1,8-12]</sup>

Additionally, the review highlighted the importance of collaboration with other healthcare professionals in providing holistic dementia care. Working closely with occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, and psychologists can enhance the effectiveness of interventions and improve overall patient outcomes. <sup>[12-13]</sup>

**TABLE I- SUMMARY OF KEY STUDIES ON NON-PHARMACOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS IN DEMENTIA MANAGEMENT**

S.No	Author Names	Year of Publication	Study Design	Outcomes	Conclusion
1.	Hunter S, Callisaya M, Lawler K	2023	Qualitative Study	Students' experiences working with dementia	Physiotherapy students gain valuable experiences during clinical placements with individuals with dementia.
2.	Quick SM, Snowdon DA, Lawler K, McGinley JL	2022	Mixed-Methods Review	Knowledge and attitudes of physiotherapists	Physiotherapists require improved knowledge, confidence, and training to provide optimal care for people with dementia.
3.	Singh J, Agrawal A, Kumari S, Tomar S, Karn A, Singh A	2022	Survey	Knowledge of Alzheimer's disease among healthcare staff	Healthcare staff should have adequate knowledge of Alzheimer's disease for effective management and care.
4.	2021 Alzheimer's disease facts and figures	2021	Review	Overview of Alzheimer's disease statistics	Updated information and statistics on the prevalence and impact of Alzheimer's disease.
5.	Scheltens P, De Strooper B, Kivipelto M, Holstege H	2021	Review	Overview of Alzheimer's disease research	Advances in Alzheimer's disease research provide insights into the pathology, prevention, and potential treatments.
6.	Schneider J, Miller J, Teschauer W, Kruse A, Teichmann B	2021	Evaluation Study	Dementia training program for hospital staff	A two-day dementia training program improves knowledge and skills of hospital staff working in emergency departments.
7.	Foley T, Sheehan C, Jennings AA, O'Sullivan T	2020	Qualitative Study	Physiotherapists' experiences and educational needs	Physiotherapists require specialized training and support to effectively care for individuals with dementia.
8.	Rodriguez Then FS, Jackson J, Ware C, Churchyard R, Hanseeuw B	2020	Review	Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspectives on dementia	A holistic approach to dementia prevention and care requires interdisciplinary collaboration, integrating knowledge and expertise from different disciplines to improve patient outcomes.
9.	Prina AM, Mayston R, Wu YT, Prince M	2019	Review	Overview of the 10/66 dementia research group	The 10/66 dementia research group contributes to understanding the prevalence and impact of dementia in low and middle-income countries.
10.	Arvanitakis Z,	2019	Review	Diagnosis and	Comprehensive evaluation and evidence-based

	Shah RC, Bennett DA			management of dementia	management are crucial for improving dementia care.
11.	Zucchella C, Sinforiani E, Tamburin S, Federico A	2018	Narrative Review	Non-pharmacological treatment for dementia	Non-pharmacological interventions, like cognitive stimulation, physical exercise, and multidisciplinary care, enhance the quality of life and functional abilities of individuals with dementia. Integrating these interventions into the care plan is vital for comprehensive support and better outcomes in dementia management.
12.	Burton E, Cavalheri V, Adams R, Browne CO, Boverly-Spencer P	2015	Systematic Review	Exercise programs to reduce falls in older people with dementia	Exercise programs can be effective in reducing falls among older individuals with dementia living in the community.
13.	Gschwind YJ, Kressig RW, Lacroix A, Muehlbauer T	2013	Randomized Controlled Trial	Falls prevention exercise program	A best practice falls prevention exercise program shows promise in improving balance, strength, and psychosocial health in older adults.

## Conclusion

This narrative review emphasizes the need for increased education and training for clinical physiotherapists in dementia care. It highlights the importance of understanding the different types of dementia, assessing functional abilities, utilizing non-pharmacological interventions, and collaborating with other healthcare professionals. Future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of physiotherapy interventions for dementia, developing evidence-based guidelines, and exploring the use of technology in assessment and management. By addressing these knowledge gaps and promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, clinical physiotherapists can provide optimal care for individuals with dementia.

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