

Beyond Prescription, Beyond Geriatrics: Developing a Certificate of Competency in Dementia Care to Strengthen Canada's Healthcare Workforce

Jeya Thayaparan, MD, FRCPC^{1,2} • Alejandra Villalobos, MD¹ • Katarina Lakovic, MD³ • Angelina Yogarajah, MD⁴
Belinda Robinson, MD, FRCPC⁴ • Pam Baxter, PhD⁴ • Nirusha Thavarajah, PhD⁶ • Cinzia Amutharajah, BScN⁷

¹ Mackenzie Health, Ontario, Canada • ² Canadian Council for Reframing Dementia Care Beyond Prescription, Ontario, Canada • ³ Toronto Metropolitan University, Ontario, Canada • ⁴ McMaster University, Ontario, Canada • ⁵ Fraser Health Authority, British Columbia, Canada • ⁶ University of Toronto Scarborough, Ontario, Canada • ⁷ Shepherd Village Inc., Ontario, Canada

*A dementia-ready
workforce for a healthier,
more inclusive Canada.*

BACKGROUND



- In Canada, about 1 in 10 adults age 65+ and 1 in 4 adults age 80+ live with dementia – a prevalence expected to rise sharply.
- By 2050, about 1 in 4 Canadians will be 65+, increasing demand across hospitals, primary care, home care, long-term care, rehabilitation and community services.
- Dementia care cannot remain primarily the responsibility of geriatric specialists. All healthcare professionals need core competencies.
- A national Certificate of Competency in Dementia Care (CCDC) is proposed to strengthen providers' ability to deliver competent, compassionate, coordinated, evidence-informed care.

OBJECTIVE

To develop a national competency framework and implementation strategy for a standardized Certificate of Competency in Dementia Care for healthcare professionals, allied health providers, community organizations, and future healthcare students – establishing consistent, evidence-informed competencies that promote person-centred, culturally safe, interprofessional dementia care while supporting lifelong learning.

WHY THIS MATTERS

- Growing dementia prevalence requires workforce capacity beyond geriatric medicine alone.
- Competency-based education can improve recognition, communication, referral, **caregiver support** and care coordination.
- A common national framework can reduce variation while supporting equity, cultural safety and interdisciplinary practice.

METHODS

- Mixed-methods approach: stakeholder consultation, Delphi consensus methodology, curriculum co-design, surveys and focus groups with clinicians, educators, long-term-care leaders, nursing professionals, professional regulators, policymakers, people living with dementia, and care partners.

CCDC COMPETENCY DOMAINS



IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION



Evaluation across multiple healthcare settings, including acute (e.g. hospitals), primary care, long-term care, rehabilitation and multicultural communities.

EQUITY-FOCUSED **REAL-WORLD SETTINGS** **QUALITY IMPROVEMENT** **CONTINUOUS LEARNING**

Implementation focus: pilot feasibility, identify barriers, assess delivery approaches, establish certification pathways, and use findings to support evidence-informed policy and system changes required for sustainable national implementation.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- A nationally standardized dementia-care competency framework strengthening capacity beyond geriatric medicine.
- Improved quality and consistency of care, increased clinician confidence across disciplines.
- Earlier recognition, more appropriate referral, and reduced fragmented care.
- Enhanced caregiver support and more equitable access to evidence-informed services.
- Guidance for continuing professional development, educational standards, certification pathways, and workforce planning.
- Stronger interdisciplinary collaboration and organizational readiness for rising dementia-related demand.
- Evidence to inform necessary policy and system changes that support sustainable implementation and national scale-up.

LIMITATIONS & NEXT STEPS

- Pilot study in progress – instructional modules and collaborations are being developed.
- Led by the Canadian Council for Reframing Dementia Care and Bridging Futures Canada Society (BFCS), with academic and community partners, including assistive-living residences and nursing homes.
- Next steps: complete pilot, refine curriculum, seek accreditation, and scale nationally.

CONCLUSION

Preparing Canada's healthcare workforce for the growing impact of dementia requires moving beyond prescription-based care and beyond reliance on geriatric subspecialists alone. A standardized Certificate of Competency in Dementia Care can build the national workforce capacity this moment requires.