



# Agents of Change

Creating National Quality Collaboratives to improve dementia care



## Newsletter #7

### Farewell and thank you!

Issue 7, December 2019

The Agents of Change project received funding in mid 2017. Two and a half years later and we are publishing our final newsletter. Over the last couple of years we have worked with an inspiring and passionate group of clinicians and developed a greater understanding of some of the barriers and opportunities to improve dementia care. Preliminary inspection of our data looks good—as presented in the graph below—and it seems that we achieved what we set out to do. This would not have been possible without the contributions of many (if you are reading this newsletter—that includes you!). So, thank you and we look forward to sharing our final results with you early in 2020.

*Dr Kate Laver, project lead*

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### Project Update

The end of November marked the completion of data collection from the clinicians. We have received around 1700 checklists in the previous 18 months. This is the reflection of hard work of all clinicians who were diligently sending us the summary of consultations with their clients for the past year and a half. We used these checklists to evaluate changes in practice throughout participation in the collaborative by comparing them against criteria which is considered best practice. Preliminary results suggest that there is a trend towards increased rates of guideline adherence after participation in the collaborative (Figure 1). Detailed project outcomes will be available early to mid 2020.

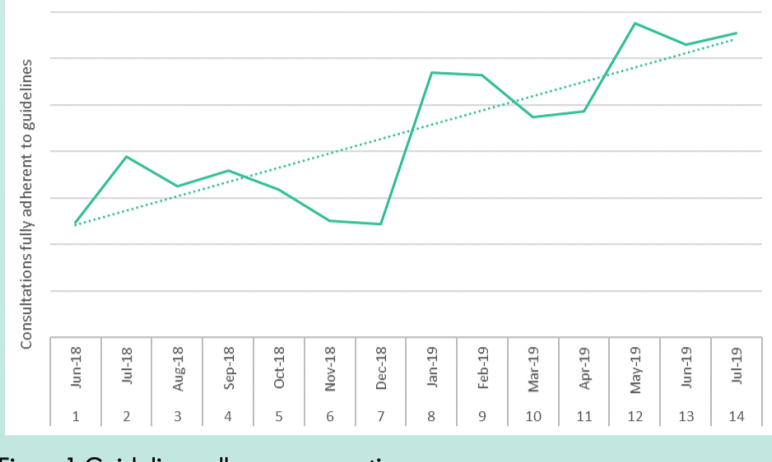


Figure 1. Guideline adherence over time

The past six months have seen clinicians working hard on implementing their quality improvement plans into practice. We received great feedback about clinicians' quality improvement process. A variety of different initiatives were described and it ranged from streamlining and improving referral pathways to the establishment of new clinics that would provide support and advice for people with dementia and their carers.

It is already known that changing established behaviour in healthcare is not easy and that it takes persistence and willingness to explore new options along the way. Hence, we are delighted that clinicians recognised both driving and restraining forces that may help or hinder the change initiative and developed a plan to address them. We hope that transformation of practice and improved changes be sustained and that this project empowered clinicians and equipped them with tools necessary for the sustainability and continuation of improvements.

#### **On implementing changes...**

While there is no unique strategy that works best for all circumstances, it is important to start by planning the implementation rather than assuming it will automatically happen on the strength of the identified need or evidence alone.



### Implementation Clinicians' testimonials

Below are some of the testimonials from the Agents of Change clinicians about their involvement in the project, changes they created and implemented, and their experiences along the way. Some have already presented their work at meetings and conferences and some will be presenting it in the following year:

*'The Agents of Change project has helped develop not just my knowledge of dementia but also my passion for working with patients who have dementia. As a result of the project we now have a walking group on our ward which helps to facilitate activity throughout the day for patients who previously would have spent most of the day sitting in their chair. Both nursing and physiotherapy staff are involved in this group and it has raised awareness of the need to regularly move and exercise. Families are also encouraged to walk with their relatives where appropriate, especially on the weekends when there are no organized therapy sessions. The data is still being finalized but we are confident that activity levels on the ward will be shown to have increased since the start of the project.'*  
(Jenny Anderson)

*'I am working in my own private Occupational Therapy (OT) practice in Sydney completing home visits for clients mostly aged over 80 years old. I joined the AoC project as I was keen to increase my skills in OT interventions for clients experiencing cognitive decline. Being part of AoC has definitely expanded & fine-tuned my practice skills. Time constraints & running a busy practice meant I needed a QI project that would be manageable & relatively simple to implement. I have now completed an evaluation of commonly prescribed Assistive Technology devices such as clocks & reminder alarms for clients with cognitive impairment. I am hoping to present the outcomes of the evaluation as an e-poster at a dementia conference in 2020. I have really appreciated all the support & encouragement I have received from the AoC team.'*  
(Pamela Maryse Arndt)

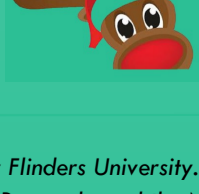
*'The Agents of Change (AOC) Collaborative has greatly enhanced my knowledge and skill sets in the realm of implementation science, focusing in the area of dementia care. AOC has taught me strategies to create cost and time effective, achievable changes into clinical practice; ensuring sensitivity to clinicians who resist change, and embracing fellow clinicians who are motivated to improve the lives of people living with memory loss and dementia. MAXCOG (maximising cognition) is a cognitive management tool developed by La Trobe University, aiming to increase older people's sense of control and ability to make ongoing improvements in cognitive functioning. During AOC engagement, I have presented my work at two Allied Health Hospital Grand Rounds, a variety of community forums in the Northern Territory and regular Aged Care Unit and OT meetings. Disseminating the positive outcomes about MAXCOG implementation, has led to the tool being utilised by clinicians within Alice Springs and the Katherine Region, also within a Darwin Private Service Provider of Aged Care, and the GEM Ward at the Palmerston Regional Hospital, Darwin. Finally, and proudly, AOC has helped me facilitate the process of MAXCOG implementation becoming embedded into the intervention services provided within our Darwin restorative care community service programmes.'*  
(Kerri-Anne Vladcoff)

*'The process of working through the staged steps of the Agents of Change Project guided me to look at possibilities to improve access for carers to professional advice regarding a diagnosis of dementia, dementia services, behavioural/environmental modification and assistance in care planning for the future. The outcome was the development of a monthly nurse led "Carer Support Clinic". At these clinics carers would be given the opportunity to spend one on one time with Dementia/Delirium Clinical Nurse Consultant for an hour to have their questions answered and to discuss a range of issues relating to dementia. To date the "Carer Support Clinic" has ran for nine months and it is evolving to be a much necessary service. Overall, my participation in the Agents of Change Project has been a very positive and rewarding experience- the linkages and connections I have made with likeminded clinicians and project staff have been invaluable and the development of a new carer support clinic that is now embedded as core business has been a highlight.'*  
(Karen Shepherd)

### A final word

On behalf of the Agents of Change research team, we would like to extend our gratitude to all participants, investigators, collaborators and expert advisers for being part of this national collaborative project. We thank you for all your hard work, your expertise, your advice and input.

**We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and happy and safe holidays**



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