



KEY POINT SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are to report on the views of people with dementia who live in care homes and their family caregivers on aspects of design that are important to them. The views should then be discussed in relation to developing physical care environments that respond to the wishes of people with dementia and their family caregivers.

Care Home Design for People with Dementia: What do People with Dementia and Their Family Carers Value?

Innes, A., Kelly, F., Dincarslan, O. 2011 | *Aging & Mental Health Volume 15, Issue 5, Pages 548-556*

Key Concepts/Context

A 'dementia-friendly' environment is argued to compensate for disability and should consider both the importance for the person with dementia of his/her experiences within the environment and also the social, physical, and organizational environments that impact on these experiences.

Methods

Six focus groups were held: two in Northern Ireland and four in Scotland. A total of 40 people participated in the focus groups. Twenty-nine people were with dementia (24 female and five male), and 11 were family carers (10 female and one male). Focus groups recordings were fully transcribed. A thematic analysis process was conducted.

Findings

Caregivers discussed the features of a building they took into account when selecting a care home, and discussed this in relation to 'bricks and mortar versus people.' Key themes reported by people with dementia and their family caregivers included how the space in the environment is used, for example, what happens in the building, and the presence or absence of certain design features. Outside space and way-finding aids were identified as positive features of the home, along with a general lack of concern about ensuite provision.



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Design Implications

The findings highlight that input on the built environment of both people with dementia and their family caregivers should be considered by care home designers involved in the building of a new home or the redevelopment of an existing care home. Focus groups are a great way to obtain input from a larger group of people at one time. The most important design features relate to way-finding cues and outside space. These areas have been found to be important in previous research on either gardens, public spaces, or on way-finding. We have also shown that the use of space is very important to both people with dementia and their caregivers; this is somewhat different from the research which stresses the need for design features.

Limitations

The authors noted that they used a purposive approach when selecting homes to conduct the focus groups to ensure purpose-built and converted buildings were included from different care sectors (private, voluntary, and statutory) in different geographical locations. It is possible, therefore, that different issues could have been raised in different homes and with different residents. This therefore limits the generalizability of our data, a common limitation of small-scale qualitative research.