

LETTERS

CRISIS IN DEMENTIA CARE

Investing in new services is key

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David Cameron wants the UK to be a world leader in dementia¹—he is clearly not aware that it used to be but has fallen behind over the past two decades.² His funding boost for dementia research is welcome, but will not, at least in the short term, directly improve patient care. Clinical and social services need extra resources to resolve the present inadequacy and recurrent scandals in services.

Financially incentivised cognitive screening of older people admitted to hospital is also overdue and very welcome, but are there adequate numbers of trained staff available to follow up such patients and improve the quality of their lives and their carers? Probably not.

Cameron's ideas of raising awareness are old hat. The Alzheimer's Society and others have done a wonderful job in raising awareness of dementia, but it has not solved the problem of providing adequate professional treatment and care. The plan to encourage the creation of 20 "dementia friendly communities," where individuals, businesses, and the state work together to support people with dementia seems yet another way to move government health service provision into the community.³

Other ideas are evolving from clinical practice. Recent evidence has shown that investing in new services can result in lower healthcare costs for older people. The rapid assessment interface and discharge model of acute liaison hospital services and the Gnosall project for dementia care are good examples.^{4 5} They require initial financial expenditure, but should provide better and more cost effective services, for which the government might then feel justifiably proud.

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- 2 Old Age Psychiatrist (Royal College of Psychiatrists, Old Age Faculty Newsletter) 21st anniversary edition 1989-2010. 2011;53.
- 3 BBC News. Dementia: PM promises push to tackle "national crisis." 2012. www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-17507678.
- 4 Parsonage M, Fossey M. Economic evaluation of a liaison psychiatry service. Centre for Mental Health, 2011
- 5 Greaves N, Greaves I. The Gnosall project: setting new benchmarks for dementia care. *J Care Serv Manag* 2011;5:49-52.

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