

LETTERS

"CASE FINDING" IN DEMENTIA

Case finding in dementia is truly a fudge

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Case finding in dementia is indeed a fudge.¹ Subjective memory complaints are a poor predictor of dementia syndrome. Palmer's Swedish study showed that asking questions about memory, using the mini-mental state examination as a second stage screening tool, and further investigation of those with lower scores, identified less than a fifth of those who subsequently developed dementia.² A case finding method that misses most cases is an unusual choice. Subjective memory complaints are common in older people and are associated with depression, trait anxiety, and physical frailty.³ Whether memory clinics are the best sources of help for this population is questionable.

Competing interests: Member of the working group for the Dementia Strategy 2009.

- 1 McCartney M. "Case finding" in dementia is simply screening with no evidence of benefit. *BMJ* 2014;349:g4791. (24 July.)
- 2 Palmer K, Bäckman L, Winblad B, Fratiglioni L. Detection of Alzheimer's disease and dementia in the preclinical phase: population based cohort study. *BMJ* 2003;326:245.
- 3 Iliffe S, Pealing L. Subjective memory complaints. *BMJ* 2010;340:c1425.

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