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This oral presentation presents the first of three main findings from this doctoral research, which investigated the relational and supportive interventions that residential care staff provided to residents living with dementia who walked in two urban aged care facilities in New Zealand. 'Perspectives on walking' revealed complex and diverse views on walking.

Walking, a beneficial activity, has been considered problematic behaviour and labelled as wandering in the residents. Over 70,000 persons currently live with dementia. This is projected to increase to 78,000 by 2026 and over 170,000 by 2050. Previous research indicated 15% to 60% of persons diagnosed with dementia would walk. Studies reported a common practice, against best practice, of administering antipsychotic medications to residents in urban and rural aged care settings to manage changing behaviours. Adverse effects of these medications include reduced quality of life, while associated stigma results in dehumanisation, a lack of respect for personhood and social disregard of residents as equal social citizens.

This qualitative research employed social constructionism theory and critical ethnography methodology to give authority to participants' voices to be heard. Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants, including residents with dementia who walked. Data were collected through participant observations, in-depth interviews, and unobtrusive methods, and were thematically analysed. Two other findings identified were 'Supporting walking' and 'Environment and walking'.

The study advocates for destigmatisation, challenging stakeholders to an ethical obligation to use dignifying language that enhances residents' psychological well-being, enabling them to carry on their normal lives. The research contributes to person-centred care literature by offering alternative and strengths-based approaches that restore dignity and agency to residents with dementia who walk.

Keywords

Residents (persons) with dementia who walk(ed), person-centred care, alternative approaches