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Background

- Hospitalisation is associated with more adverse events, poorer clinical outcomes, and higher mortality for people with dementia.
- Most hospitalisations for people with dementia happen towards the end of life - 40% within the last year alone.
- Family carers have described using hospital care as a 'last resort' after failing to access community-based care.
- This study is part of a larger mixed-methods project aiming to understand how primary and community health care service use may reduce hospital admissions near the end of life for people with dementia.

Objectives

1. Describe community-based care service use in the last three months of life among people with dementia living at home or in a care home.
2. To compare use of those care services between decedents who were, and were not, hospitalised.

Methods

- A descriptive secondary analysis of a large nationally representative post-bereavement survey conducted in 2023 in England and Wales.
- We calculated the proportion of decedents hospitalised overnight at least once in the last 3 months of life.
- We calculated the proportion of decedents who utilised each of 12 different primary and community care services, grouped by living location (in a private home or care home)
- We calculated the proportion of this service use according to hospitalisation.

Results

Analytical Sample: Of 1,194 returned surveys, 360 (30.2%) pertain to decedents with dementia. We excluded decedents missing hospitalisation information (n=8), and those admitted to hospital for entire recall period (n=13). Final analytical sample = 339 surveys.

Decedent Characteristics:

- Mean age 87 (range 56-105) | 60.5% female | 96% White British
- 36.9% (n=125) were living at home, 62.5% (n=212) in a care home

Hospitalisation:

- 50.4% (n=171) of all decedents were hospitalised overnight at least once in the last 3 months of life.
- People living at home: 66% hospitalised
- People living in a care home: 41% hospitalised

Service Use: Community-based care service use is summarized for all decedents in Figure 1 and separated according to whether they were hospitalised or not in Table 1.

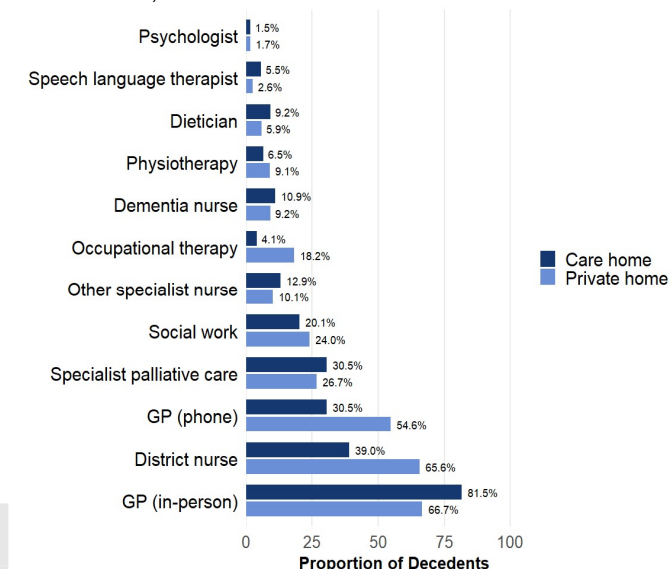
Table 1. Number (and %) of decedents who used each care service in the last 3 months of life. (N=336)*. Percentages are column percentages.

Care Service	N	Private Home (N=125)		Care Home (N=212)	
		No	Yes	No	Yes
		N = 42	N = 83	N = 125	N = 87
GP* (in-person)	82	38 (90.5%)	44 (54.3%)	167	106 (86.2%)
District nurses	80	35 (83.3%)	45 (56.2%)	78	44 (37.0%)
GP* (phone)	65	23 (57.5%)	42 (53.2%)	60	33 (28.4%)
Specialist Palliative Care	32	16 (38.1%)	16 (20.5%)	62	35 (28.2%)
Social Worker	29	12 (28.6%)	17 (21.5%)	40	23 (19.5%)
Other Specialist Nurse	12	8 (19.5%)	4 (5.1%)	27	14 (11.9%)
Occupational Therapist	22	10 (24.4%)	12 (15.0%)	8	3 (2.6%)
Dementia Nurse	11	5 (12.2%)	6 (7.7%)	21	17 (14.4%)
Physiotherapist	11	3 (7.1%)	8 (10.1%)	13	6 (5.1%)
Dietician	7	4 (9.8%)	3 (3.8%)	18	10 (8.5%)
Speech language therapist	3	0 (0.0%)	3 (3.9%)	11	4 (3.4%)
Psychologist	2	1 (2.4%)	1 (1.3%)	3	1 (0.8%)

* 3 decedents were missing data regarding primary location for last 3 months of life.

*GP: General Practitioner (Family Doctor)

Figure 1. Proportion of decedents who had contact with each care service, in last 3 months of life.



Key Findings:

- Contact with dementia specialist nurses was rare across the whole group – 11% in care homes and 9% at home (Figure 1).
- Specialist palliative care was accessed by less than 30% of the whole group (Figure 1).
- Among those living at home, use of nearly all care services was more common among decedents who were not hospitalised (Table 1).