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INTRODUCTION

- Global initiative that builds capacity for dementia awareness and advocacy
- 4 days walking 40 km on the Camino de Santiago (Spain) + 2-day scientific symposium
- Multidisciplinary, intergenerational, cross-cultural gathering of people living with dementia, care partners, researchers, clinicians, advocates, artists, etc.
- Elevates voices of people living with dementia, care partners, and advocates while promoting inclusive global solutions to address dementia
- Collaborative learning environment for knowledge exchange, community building, and reflection where all voices are equally valued

AIM

To evaluate the impact of Walking the Talk for Dementia (WTD) 2024/2025 through systematic assessment of participants’ experiences; satisfaction; and perceptions on inclusion, knowledge exchange, dementia awareness.



METHODS

- Mixed methods research examined experiences of WTD 2024 & 2025 participants
- Approved by Portland State University ethics review (Human Research Protections Program -- IRB #626)
- Six-person study team representing multiple countries and different areas of research expertise
- Findings from 2024 informed 2025 study design
- Pre- and post-surveys both years (response rates below); quantitative data analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics, qualitative data analyzed using thematic analysis
- Voluntary written/audio/video reflections in 2024 (N= 95) analyzed using thematic analysis
- Findings synthesized and integrated using a consistent conceptual framework

	WTD 2024	WTD 2025
Participants	79	75
# Countries of residence	27	32
Response rate pre-survey (n)	94% (n=67)**	96% (n=72)
Response rate post-survey (n)	87% (n=67)**	85% (n=64)
** Eligible survey population changed from pre- to post- periods.		

FINDINGS

Participant Diversity

WTD convenes approximately 80 people from 25+ countries annually integrating lived experience, science, and social connections

“The diversity of participants, from caregivers to people living with dementia, generated a safe and trusting atmosphere.” (Academic)

	WTD 2025		WTD 2024	
	N=71	Percent	N=79	Percent
Region of current residence				
Asia/ Oceania/ Africa ¹	8	11.3	12	15.2
Europe/UK	36	50.7	39	49.4
North America	14	19.7	15	18.9
South/Central America	13	18.3	13	16.5
Age group				
≤30	10	14.1	10	12.7
30-39	15	21.1	19	24.1
40-49	18	25.4	17	21.5
50-59	14	19.7	15	19
60-69	12	16.9	15	19
≥70	2	2.8	3	3.8
Primary role				
Artist	4	5.6	5	6.3
Care partner	9	12.7	11	13.9
Healthcare professional	14	19.7	20	25.3
Innovator/entrepreneur	7	9.9	6	7.6
Person living with dementia	9	12.7	12	15.2
Researcher/academic/scientist	21	29.6	7	8.9
Other ²	7	9.9	18	22.8

¹Due to the small numbers of participants from some regions, to ensure anonymity these were combined.
²Due to the small numbers of respondents in certain categories each year and to ensure anonymity of participants, “Other” includes the categories of advocate, journalist/communicator, policy-maker/influencer, and student/learner/trainee.

WTD Satisfaction Results

Results revealed high levels of satisfaction across 11 key elements of WTD.

Satisfaction Element	2024 Average Score (n=66)	2025 Average Score (n=65)
My overall experience at WTD	4.86	4.91
The 4-day walk	4.86	4.85
Opportunities to meet, interact, and exchange ideas with individuals from different backgrounds and countries	4.86	4.83
Immersive nature of the event	4.83	4.83
Opportunities to meet, interact, and exchange ideas with people living with dementia	4.9	4.78
Extent to which I felt valued, respected and/or heard	4.74	4.75
My ability to be my authentic self	4.7	4.73
The combination of the 4-day walk and the 2-day symposium	4.71	4.72
Opportunities to meet, interact, and exchange ideas with care partners of people living with dementia	4.7	4.72

“I had more open and honest conversations on the Walk than I’ve ever had at any other professional event. The level of trust and love between everyone on the Walk was extraordinary.” (Advocate)

“I felt respected ... it was a great opportunity for me to open up and meet with other participants, who are ... willing to share their life experience, work and life journey with regards to dementia and Alzheimer’s.” (Clinician)



Effectiveness of WTD Format

Results (on a 0–100 scale) demonstrate WTD is very effective in building relationships with people with lived experience of dementia, promoting dialogue, and stimulating advocacy.

Effectiveness Element	2024 Average Score (n=54)	2025 Average Score (n=51)
Building relationships with people living with dementia	89.3	93
Having sufficient time with others for conversations	92.3	92.9
Building relationships with care partners of people living with dementia	89.7	92.3
Understanding what people living with dementia need to navigate daily life	78.9	91
Becoming more of an activist for dementia	82.4	89.5
Understanding what care partners of people living with dementia need to navigate daily life	80.5	88.1
Meeting and talking with other people with similar interests	89.2	87

“The potential [of WTD] is beyond amazing. WTD can create a paradigm of change in how we perceive the lived experience of dementia and shift our understanding of what truly are the key needs.” (Person living with dementia)

CONCLUSIONS

- WTD creates an inclusive, cross-disciplinary environment to reflect on multiple dimensions of living with dementia
- Participants learn with and from each other, synthesizing professional and lived experiences, and building a community that addresses stigma, advances knowledge, and increases dementia advocacy
- All voices are equal at WTD; participants speak and engage without obstacles of power differentials or hierarchies
- WTD’s format integrating physical activity, interpersonal dialogue, social connections, and emotional experiences offers a powerful platform with unique potential to catalyze change in the dementia landscape and reshape how dementia is understood and experienced

FURTHER INFORMATION

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