

## ORAL SESSION 10: GAIT AND FALLS

### A framework to describe the levels of risk associated with dementia-related wandering

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**Purpose** Critical dementia-related wandering has been of significant concern in recent years, in part due to the rising prevalence of persons with dementia who go missing (Lissemore et al., 2019). Few resources exist to help guide families and persons with dementia to select and adopt proactive strategies to manage the risks associated with persons who are getting lost (Neubauer et al., 2018). The purpose of this project was to develop and validate a conceptual framework and series of guidelines that will help stakeholders, such as families and persons with dementia, and choose specific high- and low-tech strategies to manage challenging behaviours associated with critical dementia-related wandering. **Method** A scoping review was first conducted to identify the range and extent of wander-management, product readiness and associated outcomes within the scholarly and grey literature. Following this, semi-structured individual phone interviews were conducted with family and formal caregivers, persons with mild dementia, health practitioners, police, social workers, and staff from community organizations that work with people affected by dementia. The purpose of the interviews was to determine what strategies were used or suggested by participants and what factors influenced their adoption of the specific strategy. A secondary study involved family and paid caregivers identifying antecedent behaviours indicative of critical wandering through recording daily observations for two to four weeks. Responses from the scoping review, interviews and observations were used to develop the conceptual framework and guidelines for strategy adoption of wander-management strategies. Face and content validity of the guideline was then assessed using eight focus groups and six interviews across participants and were subsequently disseminated for use by community organizations and health professionals. **Results and Discussion** A total of 96 people participated in the development of the conceptual framework and guidelines, 34 assessed their face and content validity and 73 provided final feedback through an online and paper survey. Responses from the interviews produced four contextual factors that influenced the adoption of wander-management strategies that include high- and low-tech approaches: (1) Risk associated with wandering; (2) Culture; (3) Geography; (4) Stigma. Common antecedent behaviours of critical wandering events included packing of belongings, preparing to go outside, and door lingering or tampering within continuing care facilities. The relationships of these four factors and antecedent behaviours guided the development of the conceptual framework and guidelines. Overall impression of the conceptual framework and guidelines was positive according to users. Participants used the guidelines to choose proactive wander-management strategies. The guideline for strategy selection and use was made available across Canada for use by caregivers, health and community service providers to identify strategies to mitigate the risks associated with critical wandering. The findings from this project reinforce the importance of proactive strategies to mitigate the risks associated with getting lost and illuminate the need to balance between safety and independence when trying to mitigate this issue. It also highlights the significance of knowledge translation practices in critical wandering research that transcends beyond traditional academic settings to ensure research evidence reaches policy and practice.

### References

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