

Developing a new confidence

CAREERS STUDENT LIFE

The Challenging Dementia conference brought together a diverse audience to focus on care issues, says Alex Ocampo

As future healthcare professionals, nursing students need to be aware of the growing prevalence and impact of dementia. They also need to recognise the importance of multidisciplinary teamwork in achieving the best patient care.

Conferences are a good way of increasing knowledge and networking, although few are aimed at students from different disciplines.

I was fortunate to attend the 2013 Challenging Dementia conference, hosted by the College of Medicine and the University of Birmingham. The College of Medicine is a charity that encourages collaboration and innovation in health care, bringing together patients and health professionals.

Each year, the College and a university co-host a multidisciplinary student conference to explore important issues in a depth that is not possible in the routine curriculum (see box below right).

The main aims of the conference were to:

- ▶ Provide a forum to encourage shared learning.
- ▶ Increase students' awareness of dementia.
- ▶ Enable students to raise awareness about dementia

in their universities.

Undergraduates from medicine, nursing, physiotherapy, social work, dietetics and pharmacy attended. They came from a range of backgrounds and were at different stages of their training.

The first day involved lectures, while the second day was taken up with workshops. The expert lecturers ranged from service users, who described how they cope with dementia, to

professionals, who explained the importance of early diagnosis. One lecturer argued that raising awareness of dementia among schoolchildren could help to change attitudes.

The delegates were inspired by the passion and knowledge of the speakers, and their dedication to improving the lives of people with dementia.

The second day was spent exploring the perspectives of those who have dementia. In a Care UK workshop, we viewed life from the patient's point of view when they have to face unfamiliar environments.

Right diagnosis

In another workshop, we were encouraged to think critically about the barriers to diagnosis and treatment.

The conference was relevant

to our curricula, as we are taught about the importance of working with people from other disciplines – it leads to a greater understanding of each other's roles.

Everyone needs to learn about dementia, so they can challenge the stigma and address the myths around the condition.

Students can raise awareness in universities and at work by finding out about local dementia services, volunteering or going that extra mile for a patient. **NS**

Alex Ocampo is a nursing student at the University of East Anglia

What the students said about the conference

- ▶ 'I learnt about the roles of other professionals.'
- ▶ 'I realised that students can make a difference to future healthcare provision.'
- ▶ 'It emphasised how healthcare professionals can pool their professional knowledge.'
- ▶ 'I gained new understanding and confidence when discussing dementia.'
- ▶ 'I can now see the importance of multidisciplinary care.'
- ▶ 'I appreciate the patient, not just the condition.'
- ▶ 'I enjoyed the passion and knowledge of the speakers.'



RESOURCES

College of Medicine

The next College of Medicine student conference on long-term conditions/self-care will be held at King's College London in September.
www.collegeofmedicine.org

Whose Shoes?

whoseshoes.wordpress.com

Dr Karim Saad's blog

karims3d.com

Student Life on the internet

www.nursing-standard.co.uk/students

Dementia Friends

dementiafriends.org.uk or @dementiaFriends



Delegates were given a taste of the challenges that a dementia patient experiences every day

