

Britain's dementia shame: 50,000 forced into care homes

Getting old is a thing most people dread. As we get old people develop different forms of illnesses. 'Pill popping' becomes the norm. Young people take little notice of the old, preferring to enjoy life. Yet one day they too will become old. One particular illness older people suffer from is dementia. The most common is either Alzheimer's disease, in which brain cells deteriorate or vascular dementia that is caused by the supply of blood to the brain. About 75% of people diagnosed with dementia will have either one or the other or a combination of both.

So what are the symptoms? It must be said there are many different forms of dementia. In most cases one of the first signs of dementia is memory loss but others include losing track of time, getting lost in familiar places, and changes in behaviour. Additionally people with dementia lose their ability to reason clearly. They may find making decisions very hard. Dementia can cause personality changes, which can be particularly distressing for those who care for the person with the illness.

Dementia is a cruel condition. Many people with this illness are forced into care homes or hospital against their will. This is a huge personal tragedy and represents a huge financial burden society cannot afford. Those with dementia can be left bedridden, wearing unchanged nappies/incontinence pads and underfed. Many people with dementia need help, such as eating meals, washing and going to the toilet.

The issue has been headline news in the English press recently. They highlighted the issue, mentioning that at least 50,000 dementia sufferers have been forced into care homes unnecessarily because they do not get enough support at home. The cost to the taxpayer of having to treat them in institutions in the UK is £71million (€81.65m) a month, even though they could more cheaply and effectively be cared for at home.

Almost as much again is spent by their families on care home bills. These average an unbelievable £800 (€920) per week in England! 250,000 people with dementia are being let down by insufficient support, with many carers struggling to cope. There are currently an estimated 500,000 people with

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Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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dementia living at home.

The highly critical report *Support Stay Save Care* by the Alzheimer's Society has found substandard care was resulting in patients being admitted to care homes sooner than necessary. The report is based on a survey of more than 2,000 carers and people with dementia and their families in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Most said it was 'very important' to those with dementia that they were able to live at home. But half the carers said they received insufficient support, which research shows can lead to avoidable admission to hospital and early transfer to long-term care.

One in two carers is also at risk of stress, depression and other serious illnesses because they have to struggle without support. The report found services had not expanded since 2008, despite a continued rise in the number of people with dementia. It predicts spending cuts in the UK will make the situation 'much worse' and calls for a review of how the £2billion (€2.3billion) spent on social care can be used more effectively.

Three-quarters of those surveyed criticised the lack of coordination between health and social care. It costs the state an estimated £121m (€139.15m) a month to put the estimated 50,000 going into long-term care sooner than expected into care homes, which charge between £400-£1,000 (€460-€1,150) a week! That averages about £2,000 (€2,300) a month or £26,000 (€29,900) a year! Once people start these payments it appears to be a one way ticket. Private care homes in the UK appear to be making themselves a fortune out of all this. Can this be right?

Many people are forced to use up their life savings then sell their house to pay for the care. In England if you have more than £23,250 (€26,738) in your possession you will have to pay for it yourself. Therefore it is better to spend any savings you have and then let the state pay! In fact, only when you have less than this amount does the government actually step in!

The report says that better help from health and social services for people in their home would cut the burden on the state. However, only those with the right support can remain in their homes. The situation in Britain is expected to get much worse over the next four years due to harsh local government funding cuts that kick in shortly. What needs to be done to put things right is not rocket science, it requires compassion, common sense and a determination to treat people as people, not boxes to tick.

EXERCISES

1. **Dementia / Alzheimer's:** Think of three things you know about dementia / Alzheimer's disease.

2. **Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will slowly repeat the passage again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. **Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. **Vocabulary:** Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. **The article:** Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?
- c) **How does this compare with your country?**

6. **Age related diseases:** Think of five things associated with dementia/Alzheimer's disease. List them below. Then add the other old age related illnesses/diseases. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

Dementia / Alzheimer's	Other old age related illnesses/diseases
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

7. **Quick debate:** In pairs. Students A thinks healthcare spending should not be cut in your country. Students B think otherwise. Explain why.

8. **Let's think!** In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with the '**Dementia/ Alzheimer's disease**'. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

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9. A care/retirement home: In pairs, think of five things you might see at an old peoples care home. List them below. Then add things the nurses/care workers might have to do daily. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

What you might see at a care home	What might be done daily by nurses/care workers at a care home
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

10. Let's talk! Radio Old Age: *In pairs/groups.* You are in the Radio Old Age studio. One of you is the presenter; the other student(s) is/are one the people listed below. Today's interview is about *dementia / Alzheimer's disease*. Try to get a balanced interview. *5 minutes.*

1	A healthcare worker	3	Yourself
2	A government healthcare spokesperson	4	A journalist

The teacher will choose some pairs to tell their stories in front of the class.

11. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) What is 'pill popping'?
- 2) What do most people dread?
- 3) What are the symptoms?
- 4) What sort of assistance do people with dementia need?
- 5) What did the report find?

Student B

- 1) How many people in the UK with this disease have been forced into care homes?
- 2) How much is it a week in Britain to stay in a care home?
- 3) Name the report.
- 4) How much a year in Britain will it cost to have dementia healthcare in your home?
- 5) What is not rocket science?

12. Let's write an e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **Dementia in my country**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

13. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) Getting old _____
- b) Healthcare _____
- c) Dementia _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Do you know anyone with dementia?
- 3) How different is the situation to that in your country?
- 4) Are you shocked by the article? Explain.
- 5) How much is it for healthcare like this in your country?
- 6) Who pays for the healthcare – you or the state? Explain.
- 7) Can you afford to die?
- 8) Can you afford the healthcare fees like Britain has?
- 9) Can all these fees be justified?
- 10) Is it right that the British government can charge old people for a benefit that people thought they'd paid for? Explain.

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) Under communism healthcare in some countries was free. In Scotland, it is allegedly free. Why do you think people have to pay in England?
- 3) Are you looking forward to your old age?
- 4) What is a good age to die?
- 5) What is the point of saving in England if you have to spend it all on healthcare?
- 6) How would you compare what you read with your country?
- 7) What three suggestions do you have for people with dementia?
- 8) Have you ever had to help anyone with dementia?
- 9) What other old age related illnesses have you had to deal with?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's discuss: Age related illnesses

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

Try to keep the discussion positive, even though it's a negative subject!

Dementia and Alzheimer's disease

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Getting old is a thing most people (1)____. As we get old people develop different forms of illnesses. 'Pill popping' becomes the norm. Young people take little notice of the old, preferring to enjoy life. Yet one day they too will become old. One particular illness older people suffer from is (2)____. The most common is either Alzheimer's (3)____, in which brain cells deteriorate or vascular dementia that is caused by the supply of blood to the (4)____. About 75% of people diagnosed with dementia will have either one or the other or a combination of both.

So what are the symptoms? It must be said there are many different forms of dementia. In most cases one of the first signs of dementia is (5)____ loss but others include losing track of time, getting lost in familiar places, and changes in (6)____. Additionally people with dementia lose their (7)____ to reason clearly. They may find making decisions very hard. Dementia can cause personality changes, which can be particularly (8)____ for those who care for the person with the illness.

Dementia is a (1)____ condition. Many people with this illness are forced into care homes or hospital against their will. This is a huge personal (2)____ and represents a huge financial (3)____ society cannot (4)____. Those with dementia can be left bedridden, wearing unchanged (5)____/incontinence pads and underfed. Many people with dementia need help, such as eating meals, washing and going to the toilet.

The issue has been headline news in the English press recently. They highlighted the issue, mentioning that at least 50,000 dementia sufferers have been forced into (6)____ homes unnecessarily because they do not get enough (7)____ at home. The cost to the taxpayer of having to treat them in institutions in the UK is £71million (€81.65m) a month, even though they could more cheaply and (8)____ be cared for at home.

distressing

brain

dementia

memory

behaviour

disease

ability

dread

burden

afford

support

cruel

effectively

care

tragedy

nappies

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Britain's dementia shame: 50,000 forced into care homes

Getting old is a thing (1)___ people dread. As we get old people develop different forms of illnesses. 'Pill popping' becomes the norm. Young people take little notice of the old, preferring to enjoy life. Yet one day (2)___ too will become old. One particular illness older people suffer from is dementia. The most common is (3)___ Alzheimer's disease, in (4)___ brain cells deteriorate or vascular dementia that is caused by the supply of blood to the brain. About 75% of people diagnosed with dementia will have either one or the other or a combination of both.

So what are the symptoms? It (5)___ be said there are (6)___ different forms of dementia. In most cases one of the first signs of dementia is memory loss but others include losing track of time, getting lost in familiar places, and changes in behaviour. Additionally people (7)___ dementia lose their ability to reason clearly. They may find making decisions very hard. Dementia can cause personality changes, which can be particularly distressing for (8)___ who care for the person with the illness.

Dementia is a cruel condition. Many people with this illness are forced into care homes (1)___ hospital against their will. This is a huge personal tragedy and represents a huge financial burden society cannot afford. Those with dementia (2)___ be left bedridden, wearing unchanged nappies/incontinence pads and underfed. Many people with dementia need help, such as eating meals, washing (3)___ going to the toilet.

The issue has been headline news in the English press recently. They highlighted the issue, mentioning that (4)___ least 50,000 dementia sufferers have been forced into care homes unnecessarily because they do not get enough support at home. The cost to the taxpayer (5)___ having to treat them in institutions (6)___ the UK is £71million (€81.65m) (7)___ month, even though they could more cheaply and effectively be cared (8)___ at home.

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	unbelievable	11	degenerate
2	bedridden	12	unnecessarily
3	cruel	13	familiar
4	Alzheimer's disease	14	symptoms
5	substandard	15	determination
6	burden	16	dementia
7	institutions	17	insufficient
8	tragedy	18	themselves
9	illnesses	19	effectively
10	combination	20	additionally

LINKS

<http://www.alzscot.org/pages/info/dementiafacts.htm>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/health/mental-health/servicespolicy/Dementia>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dementia>

<http://www.medicinenet.com/dementia/article.htm>

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/dementia.html>

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/142214.php>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/worldhaveyoursay/2011/01/the_best_place_to_die.html#281469

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Britain's dementia shame: 50,000 forced into care homes: Getting old is a thing most people **dread**. As we get old people develop different forms of illnesses. 'Pill popping' becomes the norm. Young people take little notice of the old, preferring to enjoy life. Yet one day they too will become old. One particular illness older people suffer from is **dementia**. The most common is either Alzheimer's **disease**, in which brain cells deteriorate or vascular dementia that is caused by the supply of blood to the **brain**. About 75% of people diagnosed with dementia will have either one or the other or a combination of both.

So what are the symptoms? It must be said there are many different forms of dementia. In most cases one of the first signs of dementia is **memory** loss but others include losing track of time, getting lost in familiar places, and changes in **behaviour**. Additionally people with dementia lose their **ability** to reason clearly. They may find making decisions very hard. Dementia can cause personality changes, which can be particularly **distressing** for those who care for the person with the illness.

Dementia is a **cruel** condition. Many people with this illness are forced into care homes or hospital against their will. This is a huge personal **tragedy** and represents a huge financial **burden** society cannot **afford**. Those with dementia can be left bedridden, wearing unchanged **nappies**/incontinence pads and underfed. Many people with dementia need help, such as eating meals, washing and going to the toilet. The issue has been headline news in the English press recently. They highlighted the issue, mentioning that at least 50,000 dementia sufferers have been forced into **care** homes unnecessarily because they do not get enough **support** at home. The cost to the taxpayer of having to treat them in institutions in the UK is £71million (€81.65m) a month, even though they could more cheaply and **effectively** be cared for at home. (V3)

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