

February 21, 2018

Standing Committee on Families and Communities
Panels for the Missions Act Presentations

Panel A – Dr. Lili Liu [REDACTED]
(Guests: Noelannah Neubauer, PhD Candidate, Dr. Christine Daum, Researcher)

What is wandering in persons with dementia?

- More than 60 percent of persons with Alzheimer disease or another dementia wander
- If not found within 24 hours, up to half of individuals who get lost will suffer serious injury or death (Alzheimer's Association, n.d.).
- "Generally" wander versus "critically" wander (Gergerich et al., 2017)
- "Critical wandering" results in injury or death, is defined as:

"A syndrome of dementia-related locomotion behavior having a frequent, repetitive, temporally-disoriented, and/or spatially-disoriented nature that is manifested in lapping, random, and/or pacing patterns some of which are associated with eloping, eloping attempts, or getting lost unless accompanied". (Algase et al, 2007, p. 696 www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18074256)

Silver Alert in the US

- (1) Once someone is missing, a report is made to law-enforcement agency, which, (2) assesses whether the state criteria is met, and (3) raises the alert with the media. (4) Law enforcement and public are asked to report information regarding the missing person, and (5) the alert is eventually discontinued.
- State-funded in all but 5 states, which implies two key challenges.
 - Inconsistency of the program across states. State criteria for issuing an alert vary: the age for triggering an alert ranges from 55 to 65; some states require a physician's letter before activating an alert; and some states restrict an alert to only 24 hours.
 - Even as the program was estimated to cost over \$59 million between 2009 and 2013, evidence of its overall success has been hard to determine because each state collects its own local data, and there is no data on how a community helps to find people. *"Silver Alert is a quick fix to the little understood and complicated problem of missing older adults with dementia. The programs may do more harm by jeopardizing civil liberties of older adults and reinforcing negative stereotypes of seniors"* (Carr et al., 2010 gerontologist.oxfordjournals.org/content/50/2/149.full).

Silver Alert, and other related programs, in Canada

- In Canada, provincially-funded Silver Alert programs do not exist.
- In Manitoba, Bill 214 (The Missing Persons Amendment Act) was passed in 2016/17.

- In British Columbia, after unsuccessful attempts to launch a provincially-funded program, there is now a citizen-led Silver Alert program, funded through donations.
- In Alberta, Bill 210 Amendment of the Missing Persons Act, was passed in December 2017.
- Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia have partnerships with Project LifeSaver (www.projectlifesaver.org/). When individuals with dementia, autism or other conditions, enroll (at a cost of \$300.00 plus \$25 per month), they start wearing a bracelet equipped with a radio-frequency transmitter. When a person goes missing, caregivers notify the agency, which activates a trained emergency team that uses readings from receivers. Project LifeSaver does not provide data on the reliability and effectiveness of its service.
- The Safely Home® (www.alzheimer.ca/en/Living-with-dementia/Day-to-day-living/Safety/Safely-Home) service, in partnership with Medic Alert®, uses a community-support network of local chapters and law-enforcement agencies to help identify people with dementia who are lost. Participants register online (for a \$60.00 yearly fee) and search-and-rescue personnel can identify them through their Medic Alert® bracelet.
- The Finding Your Way™ (www.findingyourwayontario.ca) initiative is a community-wide program, established by the Alzheimer Society of Ontario with provincial funding. Its mission is to increase awareness of risks of missing-person events among individuals with dementia. The program has 386 partnerships with community groups and focuses on education sessions.

Challenges in locating missing people with dementia or cognitive impairment

- In one Safe Return (the US version of Safely Home) jurisdiction, among 675 persons that went missing during a 13-month period from 1997 to 1998, 84% wandered on foot and 5.6% became lost while driving. Only 3.9% returned home on their own; 33.5% were found by law enforcement, 35.8% by good Samaritans, 14.6% by business employees, 4.2% by health professionals, 5.5% by relatives/friends/public service, 1.8% by firefighters, and 8% by public service. **It takes a community to find missing older adults who are vulnerable.**
- In a Florida-based study from October 2008 to May 2010, researchers reported that missing persons on foot were more likely to be found by community members, within 5 miles within neighbourhoods, but drivers who were missing (most likely male) were more likely to be found by law enforcement, within 50 miles, in businesses or roadways. **Again, members of the community can assist with finding missing older adults with cognitive impairment.**
- This variety of needs and lessons learned from the US suggest that our public funds may not be best spent on creating rigid state (province)-run programs, with different alert criteria (often based on the erroneous assumption that people will return home by themselves) that may "lose" people driving across borders, and may not provide useful information for community members to "recognize" that a person in their midst is actually missing, even if they do not "look lost". Instead, **a better solution would be to support a federation of regional programs that can mobilize communities, in collaboration with search and rescue teams, to find the missing persons and help them return home safely.**
- The Community Area Silver Alert Program (C-ASAP) is one such program that partners with community stakeholders, such as CARYA, the City of Calgary, the Calgary Police, and other partners in BC and Ontario, to engage "community volunteers/dementia friends" to receive alerts on their mobile devices when a vulnerable older adult is missing.