

Dementia-Friendly Collective Session 2: Understanding Young Onset Dementia – Voices, Care and Community

28 November 2025 | Mindfulness Centre @ Newton

Session Overview

The second session of the Dementia-Friendly Collective was held on 28 November 2025 at the Mindfulness Centre @ Newton, with support from **Brahm Centre, National Neuroscience Institute (NNI)** and **Voices for Hope**. The session convened caregivers, healthcare professionals, community partners and corporate partners to deepen understanding of **young-onset dementia (YOD)** through lived narratives, clinical perspectives and community-based insights.

The session aimed to surface the distinct challenges associated with young-onset dementia, strengthen cross-sector understanding, and explore how healthcare, community and social supports can work together to better support individuals and families affected by YOD.

Purpose and Strategic Intent

Young-onset dementia often presents challenges that differ from dementia in later life, including work-related implications, family responsibilities and prolonged caregiving journeys. This session sought to:

- deepen sector partners' understanding of YOD from clinical, caregiver and community perspectives,
- highlight the emotional and practical impact of YOD on individuals and families,
- and identify the role of early intervention, community resources and collaborative support in promoting wellbeing and resilience.

Key Perspectives Shared

1. Lived Experience Through Film

The session opened with the screening of *Lady!*, a locally produced film portraying the daily realities of a person living with young-onset dementia and his caregivers. The film offered an intimate depiction of the emotional, relational and practical challenges encountered along the caregiving journey, while also illustrating resilience and hope. Participants shared that the film created a shared emotional reference point and helped ground the subsequent discussions in lived experience.

2. Clinical Insights on Genetics and Early Diagnosis

Following the film, an **NNI genetic counsellor** shared insights into the genetic aspects of young-onset dementia. The presentation helped participants better understand:

- genetic considerations for individuals and families,
- implications for decision-making and long-term planning, and
- importance of early diagnosis and timely intervention, particularly given the different presentation and progression patterns associated with YOD.

3. Panel Discussion: Care, Emotions and Community Support

A panel discussion featuring a **psychologist**, a **caregiver of a person living with young-onset dementia**, and a **community care partner** provided diverse perspectives on the caregiving journey. Topics discussed included:

- key clinical and psychosocial differences between young-onset dementia and dementia in older adults,
- the emotional impact on caregivers, including experiences of denial, grief and eventual acceptance, and
- ripple effects of YOD on family relationships, work and social identity over time.

The caregiver shared openly about her personal experience, emphasising the importance of self-care and accessible emotional support. Community partners highlighted the role of local resources and programmes in offering practical assistance and psychosocial support, reinforcing that caregiving is not solely an individual responsibility but one that is shared across the community.

4. Integrated Programme for Cognitive Support

Another highlight of the session was the introduction of the **NNI Integrated Cognitive Enhancement Programme**, designed to support individuals with neurodegenerative conditions, including young-onset dementia. The programme adopts a holistic approach that integrates clinical care, tailored cognitive interventions and community-based support, with the aim of supporting symptom management and maintaining quality of life.

Applied Practice Reflection

The discussions highlighted the value of coordinated care approaches that span healthcare, community and social support systems. Participants reflected on the importance of:

- recognising the unique needs of individuals living with YOD,
- supporting caregivers across a potentially longer caregiving trajectory, and
- strengthening linkages between clinical services and community-based resources to ensure continuity of care.

Closing Reflection

The session concluded with a **mindfulness exercise led by Ms Angie Chew, Chief Executive Officer of Brahm Centre**, offering participants practical techniques to manage stress and support emotional wellbeing. This closing activity reinforced the importance of caregiver self-care and provided a reflective pause to consolidate learning from the session.

Key Takeaways for Sector Partners

Participants provided positive feedback and found the session insightful and relevant to their roles. Key takeaways included:

- a deeper appreciation of the distinct challenges faced by persons living with young-onset dementia and their caregivers,
- recognition of the central role caregivers play and the emotional complexities they navigate, and
- importance of community-based resources and cross-sector collaboration in providing sustained support.

The session reinforced that while the journey with young-onset dementia can be complex, education, compassion and collective effort can help individuals and families find resilience, purpose and continued engagement in life.

