Dementia-Friendly Collective Session 4: Sleep Management in Dementia Care

5 June 2026 | Alexandra Hospital

Session Overview

On 5 June, partners from the Dementia-Friendly Collective came together for the fourth session in its ongoing series — part of a shared effort by members of the Collective to build and nurture a community of practice in dementia care. This cross-sector session, co-organised by NUHS and REACH, brought together community partners, researchers, clinicians, and advocates to explore sleep management — an often-challenging aspect of dementia care that affects both persons living with dementia and those who support them.

Key Perspective Shared

1. **Opening by Prof Wentao (Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies, National University of Singapore)**
   This segment shares how dementia affects sleep and circadian rhythms, highlighting the prevalence of sleep disturbances such as night waking, restlessness, and disrupted sleep-wake cycles. Participants were introduced to evidence-based strategies to better support persons living with dementia, alongside considerations for adapting these approaches within home and community settings.

2. **Sharing by SG Assist**
   Greg (Carer, and co-founder of SG Assist) shared on the role of assistive technologies in managing sleep-related challenges, including the opportunities and limitations in their application. He highlighted a key challenge SG Assist seeks to address — that access to gerontechnology does not automatically lead to adoption or sustained use, with the gap often lying in integration into everyday care.

3. **Sharing by Dementia Singapore**

   Vincent (Senior Occupational Therapist, Dementia Singapore) further expanded on this, sharing considerations in the prescription of assistive technology through the lens of person, environment, and occupation. He also discussed practical strategies for coping with night waking, grounding these approaches in the lived experiences of both persons living with dementia and their carers.

Group Discussions: Sleep Support Strategies

A key feature of the session was the facilitated group discussions, where participants — many of whom were community support staff, carers, or both — exchanged experiences and reflected on what sleep support strategies might realistically work in the Singapore context. Across the groups, several themes emerged:

I. **Sleep disturbances affect both the person living with dementia and their carers, often shaping daily routines and overall wellbeing**.

There was a strong recognition of the need to equip carers with knowledge on sleep hygiene, alongside strategies to manage disruptions while sustaining their own well-being.

II. **Person-centered and context-sensitive care**

The importance of taking a person-centered approach to sleep management was strongly emphasised. Rather than applying a fixed solution, there is a need to first have open conversations with families to

understand their specific sleep challenges, before working together to identify strategies that best fit their context. This includes building routines that are tailored to the individual, while remaining flexible as needs change. There was a shared understanding that no single approach works for everyone — while interventions exist, the key lies in finding what is most suitable and sustainable for each person living with dementia and their carers.

III. Assistive technology as part of the ecosystem

There was growing awareness of the role of assistive technologies in supporting safer sleep environments, alongside recognition that these need to be meaningfully integrated into care routines to be effective in practice.

IV. Perspective-taking

Beyond sleep-specific strategies, participants reflected on the importance of understanding the lived experience of persons living with dementia. Sleep disturbances can be disorienting or distressing, and behaviours should not be dismissed as "attention-seeking" but understood as part of the condition. Responding with empathy was seen as central to care.

Participant Reflections

Overall, the session created a valuable space for participants to learn from one another, bringing together clinical insights, scientific developments, community experience, and lived perspectives. It reinforced the value of coming together across sectors - to deepen our collective understanding of dementia care, and to better support persons living with dementia and those who journey alongside them.

Stages of Sleep
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