

DTSC survey of Diversional Therapists

In 2012, the Queensland Dementia Training Study Centre (QLD DTSC) conducted a national online survey of Diversional Therapists (DT) along with Occupational Therapists and Social Workers, to identify their key dementia education and training needs. The key findings are summarised below.

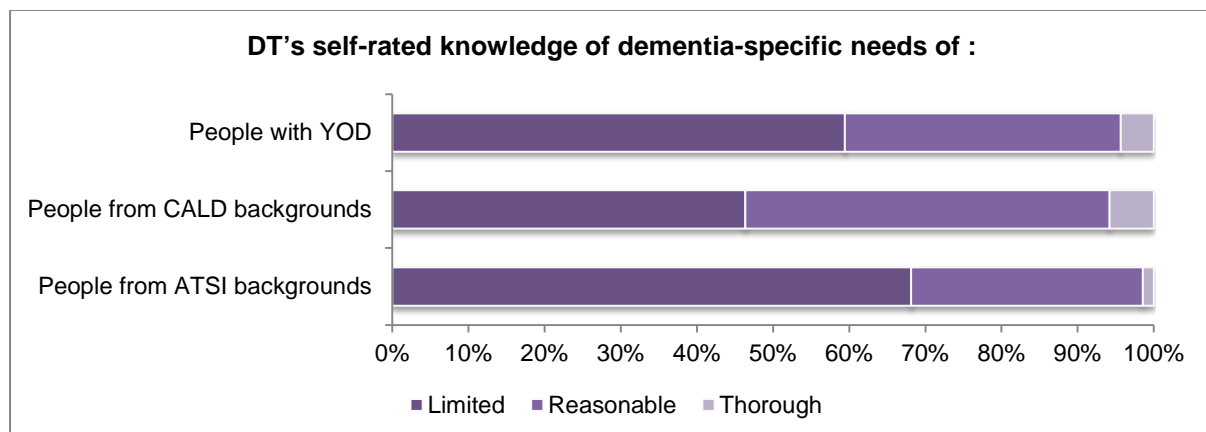
Respondents (N=69):

- Were primarily from NSW/ACT - 49%, QLD - 30% and SA 20%
- Worked in regional - 38%, metropolitan - 36% and remote - 26% areas
- Mostly worked in Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF) -81%
- Most 58% had a TAFE college level certificate or diploma, 35% had an undergraduate degree and 6% had a post-graduate qualification
- from NSW were the most highly qualified and included the only respondents with post graduate qualifications

Self-rated dementia specific knowledge

Respondents self-rated their current knowledge of 20 items including aspects of dementia such as types, stages, prevalence; practice related knowledge such as behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD), falls prevention and activities of daily living; and the needs of specific groups to three levels (limited, reasonable or thorough). They also ranked the level of importance of knowledge of each item to their current role; not important, important or essential.

A high proportion of DTs reported a limited knowledge of the dementia-specific needs of people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) background and people with Younger onset Dementia (YOD) and also those from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds. At the same time 77-96% of respondents considered this knowledge to be important or essential to their current roles.



DTs also said they had a limited knowledge about:

- Assistive technology - 38%
- Pain management - 33%
- Differentiating between dementia, delirium and depression, and dementia - 26%
- Diagnosis and assessment - 25%

...while 94-99% considered such knowledge as important or essential to their current role

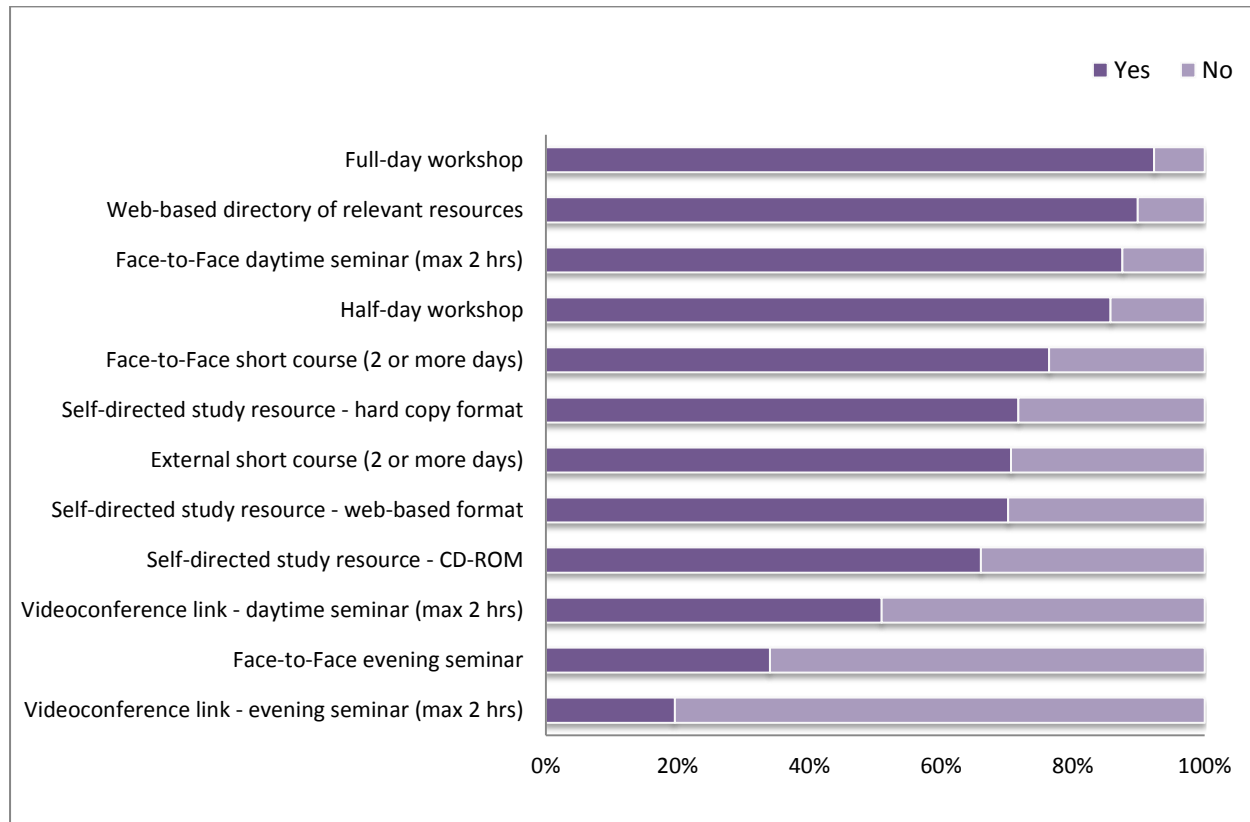
Preferred education topics and methods

The most frequently requested topics for further education and training were:

- Activities (n=35) – including: for people in later stages, for people in early stages to prolong function/QOL, activities for men, YOD, specific types (Montessori, Snoezelan room)
- About dementia (n=20) – symptoms, stages, diagnosis/ assessment, current research/ approaches, person centred care
- Behaviour management (n=16) - wandering, challenging behaviours, reducing anxiety
- Family support, family education and communication strategies (n=14)
- Palliative approach (n=11) - end of life, loss and grief
- Assistive technology (n=11)
- Younger onset dementia (n=10) – special needs, activities

The most popular methods of learning and resource types were full-day workshops, web-based directory of relevant resources, face-to-face daytime seminars and half-day workshops. Additional comments included the need for training to be ‘real’ and ‘practical’ and include an opportunity for networking and discussion. Issues of cost and geographical accessibility were also raised.

Training methods and resource types most likely to be used by Diversional Therapists if offered in the next 12 months



In summary

The survey identified:

- the highest level of education for more than half of the DTs was a TAFE certificate or diploma
- those with the highest education qualifications were more likely to work in NSW
- the need for education about the dementia-specific needs of people from ATSI and CALD backgrounds and those with Younger Onset Dementia
- the need for education about a range of topics including - dementia basics, differentiating between dementia, delirium and depression and behaviour management/ interventions as well as activity specific education
- a preference for face-to-face training methods
- the need for a range of training methods including self-directed learning
- financial and geographical access is an issue
- further dementia specific education and training was seen as valuable to assist in participants current work role