
THE **AGE** BLOG



**Show me compassion. Treat me with respect.
But first you must have the skills, knowledge and training
to understand me!**



Are we ready? The growing prevalence of dementia means employers across sectors must equip their front-line staff with the skills, knowledge and training to interact safely and appropriately

By 2031, 937,000 Canadians will be living with dementia. We will all be interacting at some point with an older adult with dementia, no matter where we work. 25,000 new cases of dementia are diagnosed each year in Canada. What about those who never seek a diagnosis — not an uncommon occurrence, since dementia is still marked by stigma? In less than 15 years, the number of people living with this disease will increase by 66% in this country. Dementia's impact will be felt well beyond health and community care. It will touch all of us.

*Who am I?
Understanding the
unique human being
behind the disease is
the first step in our
person-centred
approach to
dementia care.*

This poses a potential safety risk for those providing care or services to older adults with dementia. So what does that mean for employers? It means that we must safeguard our workers by equipping them with the necessary skills, training and practical approaches.

Every sector, whether you are employed in health and community care, public, retail, corrections, policing, education, or social services, all employers have a requirement to take every reasonable precaution in the protection of their staff safety. Implementing a Workplace Violence Protection Program is not just an ethical responsibility, it is a legal obligation.

The government mandates that where there is risk of harm to an employee due to workplace violence, a Workplace Violence Prevention Program must be developed and implemented. The program must be based on an organization-specific needs assessment and have an education component that provides staff with the necessary education, training and skills. While persons with dementia are by no means ‘perpetrators of violence,’ the responsive behaviours associated with the disease can — and do — lead to harm, both for the person with the disease and those with whom they interact, such as staff, volunteers and families.

Evidence-based education curricula that use a person-centred approach to dementia care, such as Gentle Persuasive Approaches (GPA®) in Dementia Care, or learning and development initiatives such as P.I.E.C.E.S.™ | U-First! and Montessori Methods instill a deeper understanding of the behaviour behind the disease. They teach that to be successful in our interactions, we must see the person behind the disease.

*“The afternoon knows
what the morning
never suspected.”*

— Robert Frost

Compassion and respect, while fundamental, are not enough. To be truly effective, they must be married with skills, knowledge and training in dementia. In the Gentle Persuasive Approaches curriculum in particular, the final program module (there are 4 modules in the curriculum) teaches strategies and physical techniques for use in situations where responsive behaviour escalates to the point where staff may be afraid for their personal safety. GPA not only helps safeguard staff safety, it promotes person-centred quality care while helping employers meet legislative requirements.

Organizations who provide service or care to older adults with dementia are required to equip their staff with training in dementia. This necessitates a change in the way we are providing care and our goal must be two-fold: Ensure the personal safety and well-being of our staff, while enhancing the care and service we provide to older Canadians living with the disease. Across the country, the right programs are available and affordable. We must all begin to prepare for the rapidly increasing prevalence of dementia. Act now!



Patti Boucher, AGE Executive Director



Who is Advanced Gerontological Education (AGE) Inc.?

Advanced Gerontological Education (AGE) Inc. is a non-funded not-for-profit social enterprise committed to enhancing the care of older adults through dementia education products and services, with profits reinvested to further advance our social mission. Our main product is Gentle Persuasive Approaches (GPA®) in Dementia Care, an education curriculum that equips care providers with the knowledge, skills and training to apply a respectful, person-centred care approach when interacting with older adults with dementia. It is an approach that also ensures a care provider's personal safety and well-being. To date, AGE has provided GPA training to more than 288,000 healthcare providers and students in 1,700 organizations across Canada.