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SOURCE: This leaflet is based on a journal article, available online: MacLeod, C.A., Bu, F., Rutherford, A.C., Phillips, J., Woods, R. (2021). Cognitive impairment negatively impacts allied health service uptake: Investigating the association between health and service use. *SSM – Population Health*, 13, 100720. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2020.100720>

ETHICS APPROVAL: This study was approved by the Wales Research Ethics Committee 5 (REC reference: 10/WNo01/37).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: We would like to thank the participants and CFAS Wales project team.

FUNDING: This project is funded by the Welsh Government through Health and Care Research Wales [grant SCF-16-1268]. The CFAS Wales project was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council [grant RES-060-25-0060] and Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. The sponsors played no part in the design, execution, analysis or interpretation of data, or write-up.

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Cognitive Impairment and Health and Care Service Use



We interviewed 3593 older adults (aged over 65yrs) in North and South Wales. We asked people about their health and lifestyle and assessed their physical and emotional health. We tested their cognitive abilities, such as memory, thinking and reasoning.

A quarter of the sample had a cognitive impairment. They showed indications of having a dementia, or had test results suggesting they had a high risk of going on to develop a dementia. We looked to see how having a cognitive impairment affected use of health services and social care.

We found that people with cognitive impairment were more likely to use social care services, but less likely to have their sight checked or visit a dentist than those without cognitive impairment.

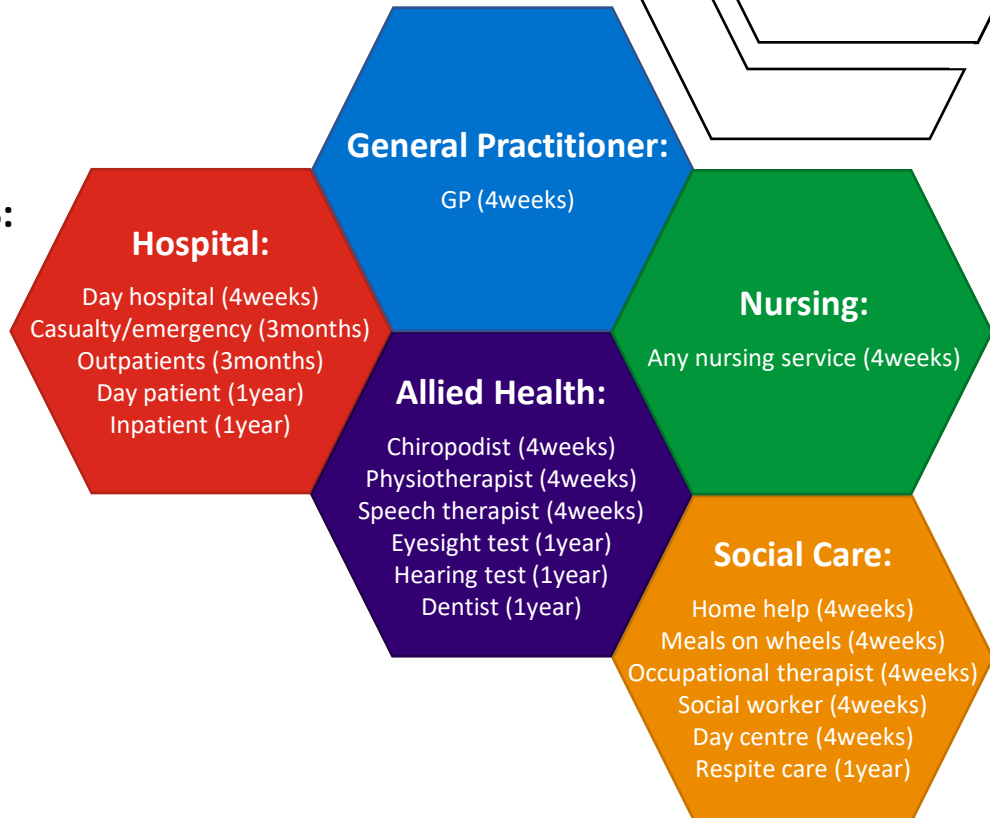
STUDY:

- People were asked if they had used a service in the preceding weeks, months, or year – timeframes for each service are given in brackets on the diagram below.
- Analysis controlled for demographic, social connection, and environment factors, as well as other health indicators.

HEALTH INDICATORS:

Self-rated health
Cognitive function
Activities of daily living

SERVICES:



FINDINGS:

- The odds of using social care increased if people had a cognitive impairment.
- GP, nursing, and hospital use did not differ between those with and those without cognitive impairment.
- The odds of using allied health services decreased if people had a cognitive impairment.
- In particular, cognitive impairment significantly lowered the odds of sight checks and visiting the dentist.
- Inequalities in sight and dental checks as a function of cognitive impairment remained after factoring in service accessibility by usual forms of transport.

KEY MESSAGES:

- There is a clear gap in uptake of sight and dental services by those with cognitive impairment.
- Routine health checks remain important even if facing other health challenges such as dementia.
- Health checks can help maintain health and can detect problems early on.
- It is widely recognised that early identification of illnesses can reduce need for later intensive and costly care packages. GP and nursing services could achieve this by targeting older people with cognitive impairment, to prevent or reduce later difficulties.
- Increasing uptake of health check and prevention services is key to increasing the overall sustainability of health and care services.
- Implementation of dementia pathways by services could facilitate use by vulnerable groups.