



# THE EFFECT OF A DEMENTIA AWARENESS CLASS ON DEMENTIA ATTITUDES IN ADOLESCENTS: A PILOT STUDY

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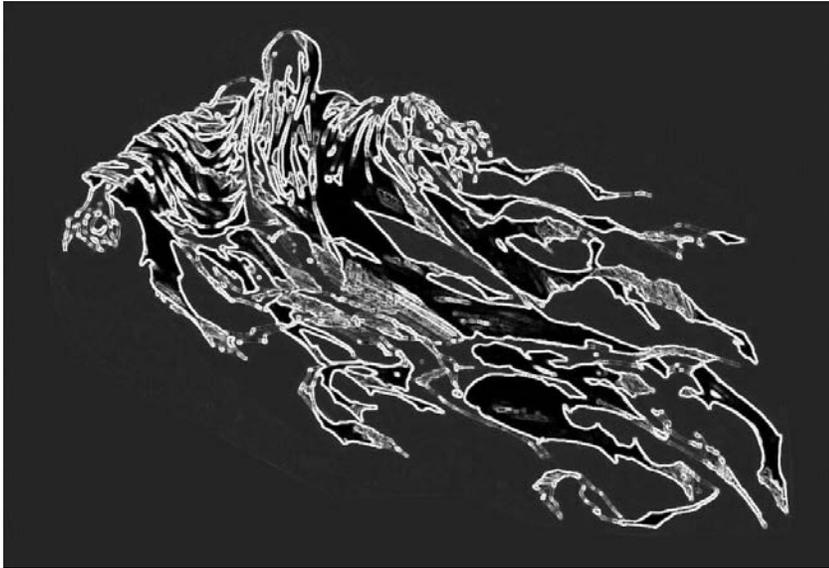
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# Stigma and dementia

- Stigma can lead to social isolation, reduced quality of life and loss of independence
- Stigma is a major barrier for seeking and accessing support, diagnosis, treatment and information
- Reducing stigma towards people with dementia is a key policy priority worldwide (Batsch & Mittelman, 2012; Department of Health, 2009; Scottish Government, 2013; WHO, 2017).
- Raising awareness about dementia is a key pathway to achieve this.

# Why start with young people?

- In the 'impressionable years model', attitudes are susceptible to change in younger years but then remain relatively stable (Krosnick et al., 1989)
- Clear route to implement initiatives that are standardized and span the whole of society
- Negative attitudes and stigma towards dementia appear to form during adolescence (Cowley, 2005; Isaac, Isaac, Farina, & Tabet, 2017; Farina et al., 2019).
- Most adolescents have had indirect contact with dementia primarily through TV and movies (77.3%) or adverts (80.2%)(Farina et al., 2019)



- “Dementors are among the foulest creatures that walk this earth. They [...] they drain peace, hope, and happiness out of the air around them [...] Get too near a Dementor and every good feeling, every happy memory will be sucked out of you. If it can, the Dementor will feed on you long enough to reduce you to something like itself [...] soulless and evil. You will be left with nothing but the worst experiences of your life” (Rowling, 1999).

# Dementia Friends Programme

- Each Dementia Friends session lasts between 45-60 minutes and, through activities and discussion, covers five key messages that everyone should know about dementia. The five key messages are:
  - Dementia is not a natural part of aging.
  - It is caused by diseases of the brain.
  - It is not just about memory loss.
  - It is possible to live well with dementia.
  - There is more to the person than the dementia.
- At the end of the Dementia Friends session, adolescents have the opportunity to turn their understanding into action by committing to a dementia-friendly action. At the end of the session, all attendees become a 'Dementia Friend'.

# Dementia Friends Programme

- Dementia Friends provides a one-off information session that allows people to learn a little about dementia, that

*“...tackles the stigma and discrimination people with dementia can face globally”*

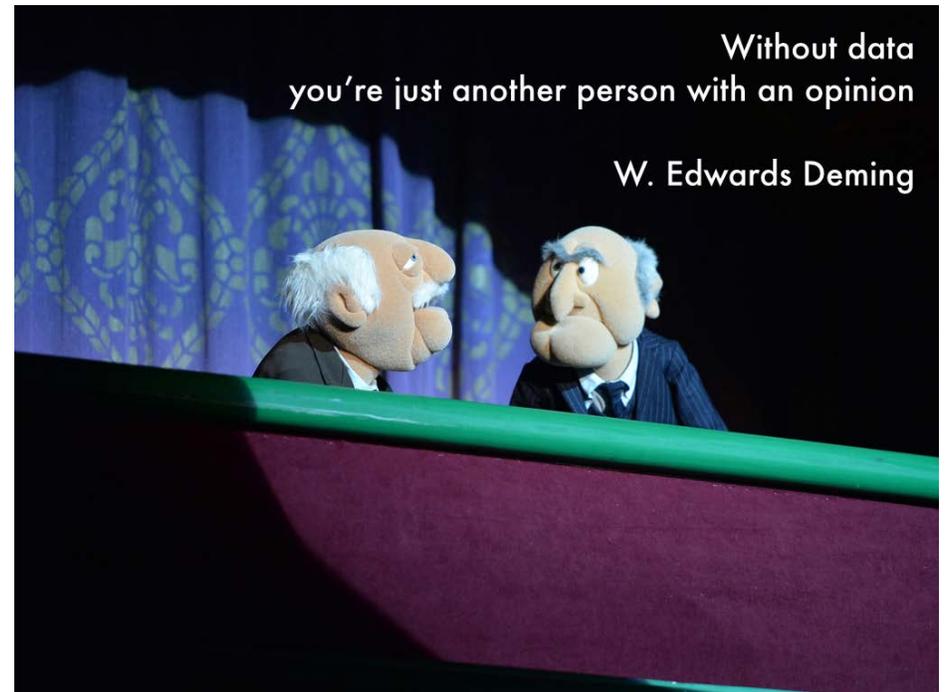
AND is the

*“...biggest ever initiative to change people’s perceptions of dementia”*  
*Alzheimer’s Society 2019*

- Over 2.5 million Dementia Friends
- Dementia Friends has been widely utilised by young people. As of March 2019, there are over 291,000 young (aged 5-25 years old) Dementia Friends (Alzheimer’s Society, personal communication, 2019).

# An inherently positive initiative, but...

- Like many other dementia friendly initiatives however, they generally have not been evaluated empirically (Hebert & Scales, 2017).



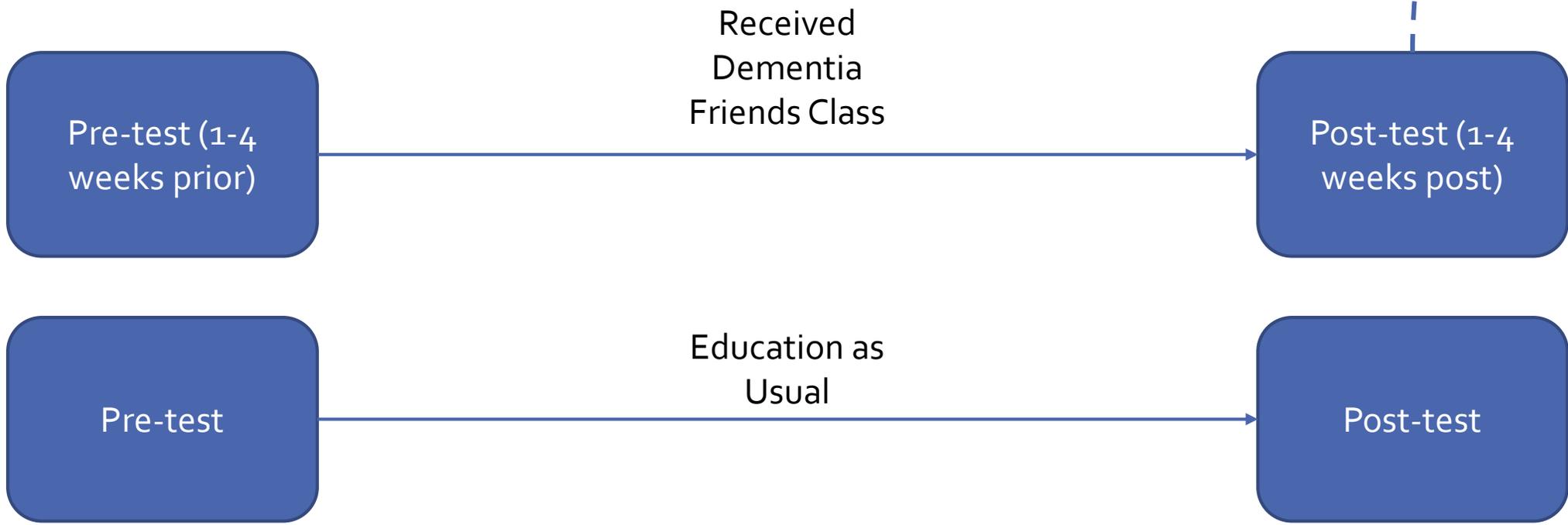
# Aims

- To understand the short-term effect of a Dementia Friends class on adolescents' perceptions of dementia
- To explore adolescents' reaction to a Dementia Friends class, and how it affected their self-perceived attitudes towards dementia.

# Methods

- 301 adolescents (Aged 12-16)
  - 198 received single Dementia Friends class
  - 102 control group
- Primary outcome: Attitudes towards dementia (A-ADS and KIDS)

30 adolescents participated in Focus Group Discussions



# Demographic data

	Control		Dementia Awareness	
	N (%)	Mean (SD)	N (%)	Mean (SD)
Age		12.7 (0.80)		12.5 (0.67)
Gender: Male	44 (43.1%)		82 (40.4%)	
Ethnicity: White British	86 (84.3%)		149 (74.9%)	
Have you heard of dementia or Alzheimer's before? Yes	101 (99.0%)		190 (95.5%)	
I have spent time with someone with dementia: Yes	50 (48.1%)		83 (41.9%)	

Results: Embargoed

# Recap

- Dementia friends does not have a detrimental effect on adolescents' attitudes towards dementia.
- In one outcome (A-ADS) it appears that Dementia Friends may even prevent a decline in attitudes.
- Focus group data (and self-report measures) show that adolescents feel that they have learnt from Dementia Friends, and that their attitudes have changed.
- Adolescents enjoyed the Dementia Friends class
- We need to recognize that there are a number of limitations:
  - Sample
  - Outcome measures
  - Long term benefits

# Conclusions

- This study provides mixed evidence about the benefits of Dementia Friends on adolescents' attitudes towards dementia.
- We need to better understand why there are differences between different outcome measures.
- The fact that the adolescents enjoyed the class is something that can be built upon.
- These findings need to be replicated in a larger randomized controlled trial.

# Final thought

Dementia Friends has been a success in terms of numbers of people enrolled, however, achieving a set number does not “...***guarantee the fight against stigma, prejudice and discrimination will have been won***” (Rahman & Harrison, 2016)

## Thank You

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