

## Improving dementia crisis care – Alessandro’s fellowship journey



Alessandro Bosco joined the Dementia Community (DEMCOMM) fellowship in August 2024 to lead research on emergency dementia care. His work focuses on improving crisis response for people with dementia, particularly in rural areas like East Sussex. He collaborates with healthcare professionals and engages with the public to ensure lived experiences shape the research. Highlights include consultations with Dementia UK and the Alzheimer’s Society, and early findings suggest a need for better identification of individuals at risk of crisis.

### **How long have you been in this role? What does it involve?**

I have been in this post since August 2024. The role is very diverse in nature as it consists of managing a whole research project link with a post doctoral researcher who is supporting the study delivery across three research fellows’ work.

As part of my role, I am actively engaging with members of the public to ensure quality of study delivery and that the views of people with lived experience of dementia are considered throughout the research life cycle, from the very moment of study conception to ethical approval and data collection, analysis and dissemination. I am also involved with external collaborators in grant writing with colleagues from the University of Cambridge and Oxford on a proposal looking at improving dementia crisis care in emergency settings.

### **What made you apply for the DEMCOMM fellowship?**

This type of fellowship is a very good standpoint to further develop my interest in emergency crisis care and draft grant proposals for future funding applications to help improve the life of people living with dementia and their families.

### **How easy did you find the process?**

The process of applying was straight forward as a regular job application would entail. The information provided was extensive and provided me with enough information to have a sense of what to expect once in the programme.

### **Where did you find out about it?**

I believe it was through the NIHR [dementia researchers'](#) website or LinkedIn.



### **What has this fellowship enabled you to do?**

This fellowship has been a great opportunity for me to get to know new collaborators (clinicians and academics) working in rural areas in the UK, where more inequalities are experienced in care delivery for people accessing health and social care services. I am in fact currently organising one-to-one interviews with healthcare professionals working in ambulance and emergency response teams across East Sussex to explore what it is like to provide emergency support for those families requiring urgent response in dementia related situations.

### **Do you think this has made an impact in your work? Who is at the receiving end of this research?**

It may be a bit early to say whether my research has had any impact as I am currently collecting data from healthcare staff working in emergency dementia care, the data has not been analysed nor shared with participants yet. However, with study collaborators, we managed to engage with a group of family carers and people living with dementia. During consultation with the Alzheimer's Society Research Network in August 2024 and the Inpatient Mental Health and Dementia Experience Group, through Dementia UK, members of the public provided informative feedback on the aims and design of this fellowship and felt this project was timely for people living with dementia. An artist created a comic strip around the topics discussed in the meetings.

### **What have been the highlights of the project?**

As data collection is still ongoing it might be early to derive any conclusion on findings. The staff I have interviewed so far seemed to all report the need to improve early on in disease trajectory, the identification of those people who may be at increased risk of crisis episodes and requiring emergency/hospital care.

### **What have been the challenges?**

It was not very easy to identify emergency services from rural areas across the country, therefore, with study collaborators we decided to focus on East Sussex. This would help me identify needs of those clinicians working in a rural and coastal area, to show what is needed to best support those experiencing geographical and economic barriers to care.

### **What kind of support did you get?**

At Brighton and Sussex Medical School (but also from external collaborators) I am receiving the best support I have ever received in my career, through training in big data analysis but also by being part of a trusted network of researchers.



### **What happens next?**

I am developing with study collaborators a research proposal linked to the current fellowship on emergency dementia care, by focussing on the experience of people living with dementia and their carers, with the hope to find strategies that can identify those at increased risk of requiring professional emergency response well before a crisis episode is experienced.

### **What advice would you give someone looking to take part in research who has never done research before?**

I would advise reading the information sheet to see exactly what the research participation would involve for the respondents. It would be good to also get to know the researcher(s) conducting the research project to see if there are any opportunities to ask questions about study involvement and/or just to simply familiarise yourself with the research environment.

### **What qualities do you think you need to be a good researcher?**

I believe a good researcher would need to be very well trained in research methodologies required for their study field, the more specialised they can become in one specific methodology (be it for data collection and or analysis) the better it may be for their career. Also, a researcher needs to be intellectually honest and be able to establish good relationship with colleagues within and outside their research team.