

Cognitive Dementia and Memory Service (CDAMS)

The Cognitive, Dementia and Memory Service (CDAMS) is a specialist multidisciplinary diagnostic, referral and educational service for people experiencing memory loss, or changes to their thinking (cognition), and for those who care about them. CDAMS does not provide ongoing treatment or case management.

Early diagnosis is important to determine appropriate treatment needs and to plan for the future. It provides people with a timely opportunity to learn about their condition, understand changes as they occur and to cope with day to day issues of cognitive impairment.

Anyone experiencing changes to their memory and thinking, or those who support them, are welcome to contact CDAMS.

Referrals can be made through general practitioners, community agencies or by self referral directly to CDAMS.

Where a person is under 50 and there are no obvious risk factors for dementia, efforts should be made to pursue alternative more appropriate avenues of assessment through a discussion with their GP as a first option. Where cognitive or memory problems have been long standing and there is no recent evidence of deterioration, or the decline is related to a known illness (eg Acquired brain injury, Multiple sclerosis) then CDAMS assessment may not be appropriate.

Forgetfulness and normal ageing

As part of the ageing process some people may notice some mild slowing in their memory and thinking. This is normal. If, however, the changes become progressively more obvious and begin to impact on everyday life, an assessment of memory and thinking would be appropriate.

What causes memory loss or changes to thinking?

There are many causes of cognitive impairment and memory loss, including:

- anxiety/stress/depression
- dementia – of any type, for example, Alzheimer’s Disease
- stroke
- other neurological disorders such as Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson’s Disease
- traumatic brain injury
- alcohol
- side effects of medication
- vitamin deficiency.

Accurate diagnosis is vital so that appropriate treatments and information can be recommended.

Symptoms of memory loss and changes in thinking can include:

- rapid forgetting
- repeated questions or conversations
- losing items frequently or regularly eg. wallet, keys
- forgetting appointments, birthdays, social commitments

- becoming lost while driving
- regular problems finding words during conversations
- difficulties learning new skills
- reduced ability in doing well known tasks eg. bill paying, cooking
- behavioural or personality change
- feeling overwhelmed or confused by new situations.

What is CDAMS?

CDAMS is a specialist diagnostic clinic which aims to assist people with memory loss, or changes to their thinking, and those who support them.

CDAMS provides:

- expert clinical diagnosis
- information on appropriate treatments
- education, support and information
- direction in planning for the future
- information on dealing with day to day issues.

- linkages for clients or their family to other service providers or community supports.

What is involved in a CDAMS assessment?

A CDAMS assessment will include medical and allied health consultations, and may include a visit to your home. Where appropriate, other specialist assessments will be conducted eg. neuropsychology. The outcome of these consultations and recommendations will be discussed with the client, and if agreed to, with their family and general practitioner.

CDAMS specialists may include:

- geriatrician
- psychogeriatrician
- occupational therapist
- speech pathologist
- neurologist
- neuropsychologist
- social worker/family therapist
- community nurse.

Mum had always been full of life, made friends easily, loved her home, well, her garden mostly. Housework had never been her priority – we were. We began to see some changes; constantly repeating herself, forgetting conversations and muddling appointments. We had all tried to talk to her about these lapses, but she became quite angry which was so unlike her. Mum put it down to ‘just getting older’.

We contacted her local doctor who suggested one of us should be present at her next visit. The doctor asked a lot of questions and after talking with us requested some tests and referred Mum to CDAMS.

Through the CDAMS process we saw the clinic coordinator, a geriatrician and a neuropsychologist, who were interested in the history of the changes as well as how we all were coping with them.

At the family feedback meeting, the team gave us an explanation of why these changes were occurring. They also provided a lot of useful information on Mum’s condition and treatment available. We also discussed how best to manage both now and in the future.

We still have our ups and downs, but at least now we understand what is happening and where to turn for help.

Where is CDAMS located?

Melbourne and metropolitan centres	Telephone referral	CDAMS service
Broadmeadows Health Service (Northern Health) Broadmeadows	9495 3443	8345 5335
Bundoora Extended Care Centre (Northern Health) Bundoora	9495 3109	9453 3109
Caulfield Hospital (Alfred Health) Caulfield	9076 6776	9076 6010
Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital (Austin Health) Heidelberg	9496 4337 (fax)	9496 2596
Kingston Centre (Monash Health) Cheltenham	1300 342 273	9265 1291
Mt Eliza Centre (Peninsula Health) Mt Eliza	9788 1377	9788 1485
Royal Park Campus (Melbourne Health) Parkville	8387 2333	8387 2427
St Georges Health Service (St Vincent's Health) Kew	9816 0577	9816 0577
Western Health (Sunshine Hospital) St Albans	8345 1355	8345 1355
Wantirna Health (Eastern Health) Wantirna	9881 1100	9955 1230
Yarra Ranges Health (Eastern Health) Lilydale	9881 1100	9955 1230
Victorian country areas	Telephone referral	CDAMS service
Albury Wodonga Health	(02) 6058 4520 (fax)	(02) 6058 4830
Anne Caudle Campus (Bendigo Health Care Group) Bendigo	1300 733 581	5454 8500
Ballarat Health Services Base Hospital (Ballarat Health Services)	5320 3704	5320 3704
Baw Baw Health and Community Care Centre (West Gippsland Healthcare Group) Drouin, Korumburra, Bairnsdale	5625 0204 (fax)	5625 0242
Goulburn Valley Health (Shepparton)	5832 3100	5832 3100
Latrobe Regional Hospital (Traralgon)	5173 8506	5173 8822
The McKellar Centre (Barwon Health) Geelong	1300 715 673	4215 5411
Northeast Health Wangaratta	5722 1663	5722 1663
Sunraysia Community Health Services (Mildura)	5022 5444	5022 5444
Wimmera Base Hospital (Horsham)	5381 9333	5381 9333

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