



Where memories go: Why dementia changes everything

2017, 1 (1), 17-18
doi: 10.5505/jaltc.2017.98608

by Sally Mangusson, Two Roads, London, 2014, 408 pp, ISBN 978-1-444-75181-9

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The world is aging and so is humanity. According to National Institute on Aging, by 2050, the number of people aged 65 or older will have tripled to almost 1.5 billion, representing 16 percent of the world's population (Suzman & Beard, 2015). This rapid increase in the number of the elderly throughout the world has brought *elderly care*, fulfillment of the special needs and requirements unique to senior citizens, and *residential care*, long-term care provided in a residential setting as opposed to family home, into the agenda of health systems and increases in dementia cases has made it an imperative to include dementia in elderly and residential care as a global health challenge.

Dementia is a general term that describes the set of symptoms including memory loss and difficulties with language, thinking, behavior and problem solving to a degree that may interfere with daily tasks, social life or work (Alzheimer's Society, 2017). The number of people with dementia is steadily increasing in the world, mostly affecting people over 65 and research shows the need for careful planning to ensure that best care and support is given to the large part of the population that will require it one day.

Dementia causes personality changes. It creates confusion, apathy and withdrawal (Laputz, 2017). The memory loss that accompanies it is progressive and it will leave the affected ones devoid of their cherished memories soon. Dementia can erase the memories of our loved ones, but it will not erase the memories that our loved ones leave us!

Sally Mangusson's acclaimed book "*Where Memories Go: Why Dementia Changes Everything*" is both a memoir and a manifesto on caring for people with dementia. A broadcaster and author

by profession, Magnusson calls this work "the biggest story of her life." Max Pemberton of Telegraph writes "This book should be compulsory reading for every doctor and nurse."

In the book, Sally Mangusson talks about dementia, one of the greatest challenges of our times, the curse of 21st century, the loss of one's memories and the descent into oblivion and as she states, this can only be managed by poets sometimes:

"The brain's black holes into which memories have fallen" (Dementia, McIntyre, Lorn, as cited in Mangusson, 2014, p.91).

Taking care of her mother with dementia with the help of her two sisters, the author experiences a whole range of feelings and she learns about and reflects on available care options for dementia. Watching a mother who has cherished words all her life only to lose them one by one along with her memories has given the author the lead to do research in the field and she shares this information in the book in a most endearing manner, mixing the facts with feelings, the history of dementia with anecdotes and her mothers' track oh health with useful advice for practitioners. She cites the new developments in gerontology and dementia care as well as residential care, gives information about latest research on the link between dementia and genetics, talks about integrated, multi-disciplinary and small scale community models care models and cites researchers, provides information on local and global initiatives, new kinds of residential care that have been tried, cites commission reports on dementia care and includes interesting results which emphasize that the current situation cannot continue, but she has shown in the book that it unfortunately does.

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Article History: Received: 9 May 2017 | Accepted: 16 May 2017 | Published Online: 17 May 2017



Magnusson also introduces a new method that will help people with dementia to connect with their past more easily, at times of frustration and loss. She has successfully used this playlist method in which people with dementia are provided with a playlist of personally meaningful music from their past lives. With her charity *Playlist for Life* (Metcalfe et al., 2017) she continues to encourage the use of music to ensure people with dementia, an anchor to hold on to when the grey matter of the brain is more clouded and the skies turn blacker. Testimonies on the *Playlist for Life* website and the Facebook page talks about joy when music restores language for a while, brings the liveliness in people with dementia “as if a light bulb has been switched on again”.

The memoir takes us on a journey of love and life as well as loss and death. Losing a loved one to an insidious disease and her becoming a completely new person who has forgotten many things about you, her life; her cherished memories is heart rending but this makes the book inspiring for others who will surely walk this path. The book gives us facts and ideas as well as hope for future developments in care for people with dementia.

Dementia takes the memories of our loved ones, one by one, and carries them to places unknown and uncomfortable. But it does not take ours. Hence, it is in our hands to ensure they are given the best care, with dignity, with respect and most importantly, with love.

Today, the statistics and research report that support is necessary for people with dementia and

methods that will provide them with better care, with dignity and respect are essential.

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