

# Fewer psychosocial problems in patients with dementia during second lockdown

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The COVID-19 pandemic still poses enormous social challenges. People with cognitive impairments (problems with, for example, memory and concentration) and dementia are doubly affected by this pandemic. On the one hand, they have direct risk of severe COVID-19 symptoms. And on the other hand, the restrictive measures have hit them extra hard. As a

result of disrupted formal care, such as home care, the informal caregivers were extensively burdened. During the first lockdown in the Netherlands, people with cognitive complaints and their loved ones were affected by the discontinuation of support services. The second lockdown was more strict than the first: Many shops were closed, a curfew was imposed and home visits were limited to one person a day.

## **Cognitive decline**

During the first [lockdown](#), worries were reported for faster cognitive decline in patients with [dementia](#). This is due to the cessation of formal care and the increase in [psychosocial problems](#) as a result of social isolation during lockdown. Whether there is actually a decline due to the lockdown is currently being investigated.

This new study shows that patients and loved ones have adapted to the challenges of the COVID-19 lockdown. For example, during the second lockdown, patients and loved ones reported fewer psychosocial problems, such as anxiety, compared to the first lockdown. In addition, patients experienced more social support compared to the first lockdown. Finally, the researchers found an important protective factor against negative feelings during the lockdown. Patients and loved ones who experienced support from family and friends reported fewer negative feelings, such as loneliness and sadness.

## **Effects of COVID-19**

This is the second scientific publication of the POLAR project: Psychosocial effects of COVID-19 in Alzheimer's disease. ZonMw made a COVID-19 grant available in 2020 for the project, which is led by Wiesje van der Flier, who is assisted by researchers Ingrid van Maurik and Els Bakker, all of Alzheimer Center Amsterdam, Amsterdam UMC. This means that research will be continued into the

effects of the COVID-19 measures on patients with cognitive impairments and their loved ones. Alzheimer Center Amsterdam is joining forces with Alzheimer Nederland, Pharos and Hersenonderzoek.nl. They investigate the psychosocial effects of the COVID-19 measures, look at cognitive decline as a result of the loss of care and structure and look at the effects on care use. An important part of POLAR is that the findings are put into practice through toolkits, webinars and video clips.

**More information:** Els D. Bakker et al, Psychosocial Effects of COVID-19 Measures on (Pre-)Dementia Patients During Second Lockdown, *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* (2022). [DOI: 10.3233/JAD-215342](https://doi.org/10.3233/JAD-215342)

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