Reviewer’s report

Title: Persons with dementia lost in the community: Is it wandering or something unique?

Version: 1 Date: 4 January 2011

Reviewer: Jan Dewing

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for your submission. I enjoyed reading your research and seeing how you are examining possibly the most serious consequence of wander-walking, that of getting lost and its possible outcomes. Your section on the findings was most detailed and illuminating.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

1. I would ask that you briefly say something about the types of dementia the people in the research you conducted had and those in the studies cited as [2, 4-8]. Were they mixed bio-medical diagnosis groups or specific types of bio-medically diagnosed dementia such as Alzheimer’s? Given your research method, you may not be able to state with certainty.

2. There are several examples throughout the paper where I feel you assume that what is happening in the US is the international ‘norm’. This is not the case. For example in regard to community based programmes:

   Communities have begun to respond with limited efforts to find lost PWDs who left by car by enacting programs such as those that use community alerts to notify citizens of a missing individual (i.e., Silver Alert programs).

   The most common program to provide this is the MedicAlert SafeReturn™ program. A number of communities have also initiated a local alert systems in which a database is kept in case of an event [18]

   Please would you either clarify that you are offering an American perspective in this paper or broaden your scope to be inclusive of other (Westernised) perspectives.

3. These programs could reduce the time it takes to find a lost PWD as well as deaths that occur as a result of exposure. Is there evidence to suppose this assertion or is this your hypothesis – please be clearer to help novice researchers and practitioners reading this paper.

4. US newspaper articles published over 48 consecutive months from July 2003 through June 2008. I note you say most reports came from local papers, suggesting
these events do not make national news – could you let readers know something about the range please - how many US states were covered in your local papers? I note you say on p7 that you collected details of the states and name some of them.

5. The Trails B Test can be used to assess way finding ability. Please clarify and expand slightly.

Minor Essential Revisions

6. Although background, some of this requires referencing please:

As the population ages and the prevalence of illnesses causing dementia increases, communities will be responsible for taking on a greater role in the management of problems associated with dementia. Chief among these, from a community perspective, is the danger of persons with dementia (PWD) becoming lost alone in the community.

we will examine the conceptual differences between the definition of wandering [3] and the characteristics of becoming lost in the community

and

3rd aim: Determine whether characteristics of a lost event are similar to or different from an accepted definition of wandering.

I feel you should state openly that (i) wandering does not yet have an internationally agreed definition. The US descriptions are not adopted internationally and (ii) US descriptions of wandering are generally behaviourally oriented.

7. PWD lost in the community [2, 4-8]

Please briefly define what getting lost means; ie your working definition for your research– it may or may not be different from common sense understandings. You have offered a working definition of wandering.

8. For instance, there is no empiric evidence that wandering is directly associated with

exiting or eloping. In fact, there is some evidence that exits from home and formal - 6 -

care settings are purposeful events [10, 14] I suggest that you consider stating the overall body of research on wandering is both recent and small, therefore the evidence may unsurprisingly not yet be available.

9. (CA, FL, NY, PA, IL, TX) – please write out in full - for international readers

10. For over half the sample, the event was not temporally-disordered as they were on a usual,

expected activity. Please specify you are referring to chronological time here.

- Discretionary Revisions
11. during normal activities – I suggest you use the term 'usual' rather than normal to be less judgmental about the activities persons living with dementia engage in and find meaningful.

12. Other PWD became lost when they were intentionally left alone, either at home or while sleeping. Do you mean on waking from sleep? And do you mean night time sleeping, day time or both?

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'