



### OC067

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**Session:** Engaging People with Dementia and Carers

#### PHOTOGRAPHIC ENGAGEMENT WITH PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

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#### **Abstract:**

**Background and Objectives of the study:** The study aimed to understand the experiences of people with early-stage dementia, who attend an adult school (Voksenskolen for Undervisning og Kommunikation) as students taking classes in cognitive training, art and music therapy in Denmark. This project used photography and storytelling methods to support the voices of the students to be heard in research as a way of gaining an understanding of their lived experience. The literature reveals that little attention has been given to date to the potential to involve people with dementia as active participants in research, though they can contribute with valuable information. Photography can be used within research to capture the meaning making and mental construction of events and experiences of people with dementia, who often have difficulties in communicating their needs and wants through language alone.

**Methods:** The qualitative study was undertaken using photographs taken by people with dementia as prompts to support their narrative experiences of being students at the school and home. Students attending VUK were provided with cameras and were asked to take photos of their school and home life which showed their experiences of being a student and living with dementia. These photographs were used as prompts and discussion points during four weekly sessions, which were run with two groups of students each with 5 participants. Each session was video recorded to capture the stories and interactions of the students. The videos were transcribed and thematically analysed.

**Results:** Photos facilitated memories of current and past activities providing people with dementia greater description and depth of their experiences of being a student and home life. It encouraged interest in other people's stories and generated conversations between the participants prompting shared experiences and complimentary stories. The process of taking and discussing the photographs was enjoyable, empowering and increased self-confidence. They expressed interest in the forthcoming sessions and were keen to see images they had taken that were not yet shown.

**Conclusion:** Using photography as a research method with people with dementia can be a strong and valuable way to engage them in research and get a better understanding of their lived experiences. It can be an effective way of working alongside people with dementia and provides an insight in their life journey.

**Keywords:** Participatory engagement design, Photography and storytelling, Dementia