

Every picture tells a story: Selecting images for a dementia e-course

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The problem

- Dementia **stigma** contributes to discrimination in healthcare and in the community
- Images can either **challenge** or **reinforce** stereotypes
- Freely available stock images often perpetuate bias
- Organisations recommend using realistic and positive images of people living with dementia, but recommendations lack practical guidance

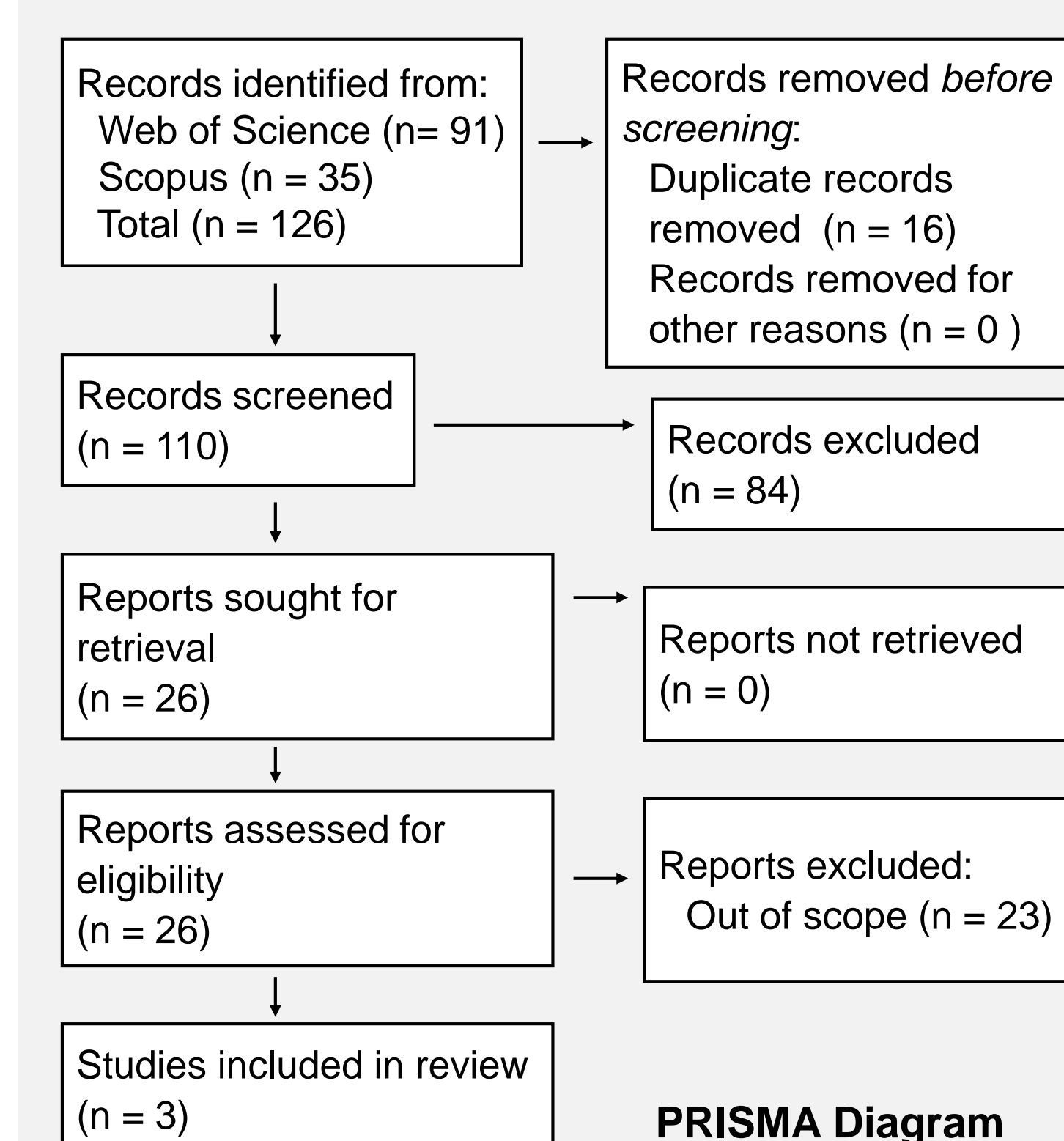
Aim

- To explore strategies for selecting stock images:
- that challenge stereotypes
 - to include in a new online course for health workers about dementia rehabilitation

Methods

- A scoping review of research on the impact of visual representations of dementia on attitudes and stigma was conducted
- Insights from literature and guidance from dementia organisations were combined to develop a practical image selection strategy
- This strategy was applied when creating an online training course for health professionals

Results



Three relevant articles were identified.

All used multimodal critical discourse analysis to highlight how photographic elements — such as camera angles and framing — can stereotype people with dementia.

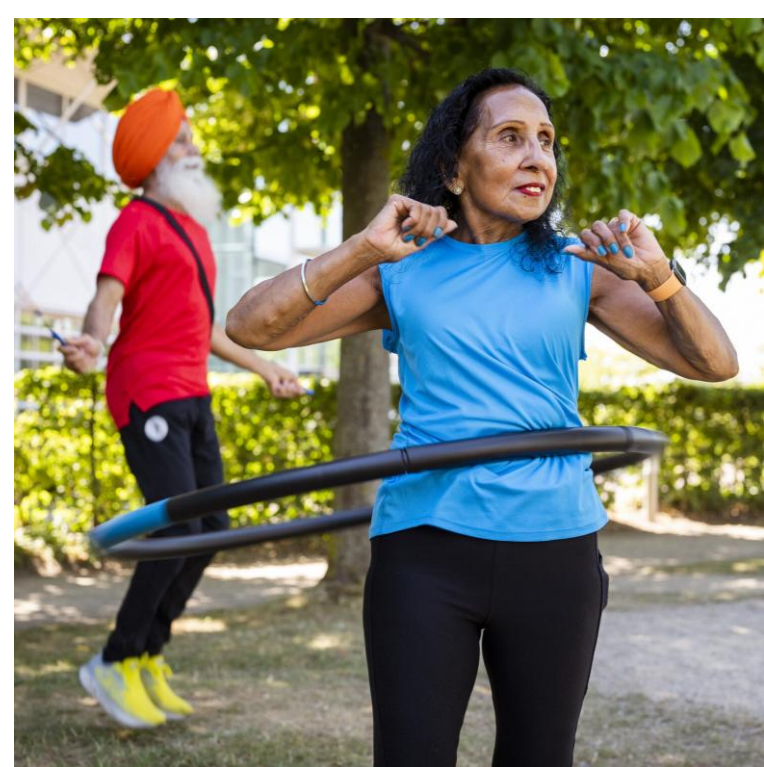
Examples of stereotyping in stock photos included:

- Fragmentation – showing only part of the body
- Visual distance – person not looking at the camera or others in the image
- Disempowerment – person portrayed as powerless, with others ‘in charge’
- Passivity – person shown as inactive and disengaged

Five tips for image selection:

1

Know your message

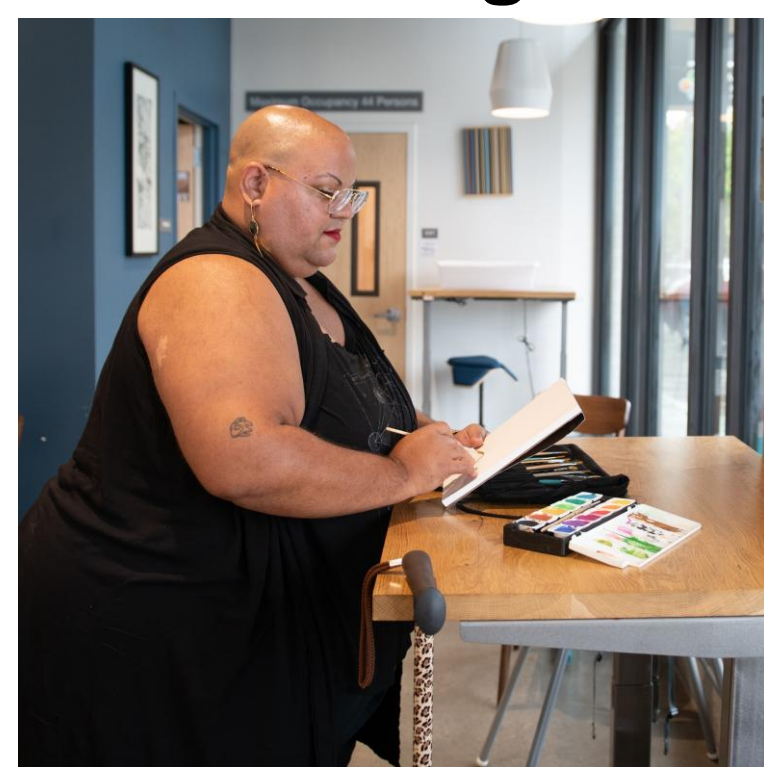


Think about what story you want to tell. This will guide your search.

Image credit: Age without Limits

2

Inclusive image banks



Try to use inclusive image banks. See the information box below for tips.

Image credit: Disabled and Here

3

Change search terms

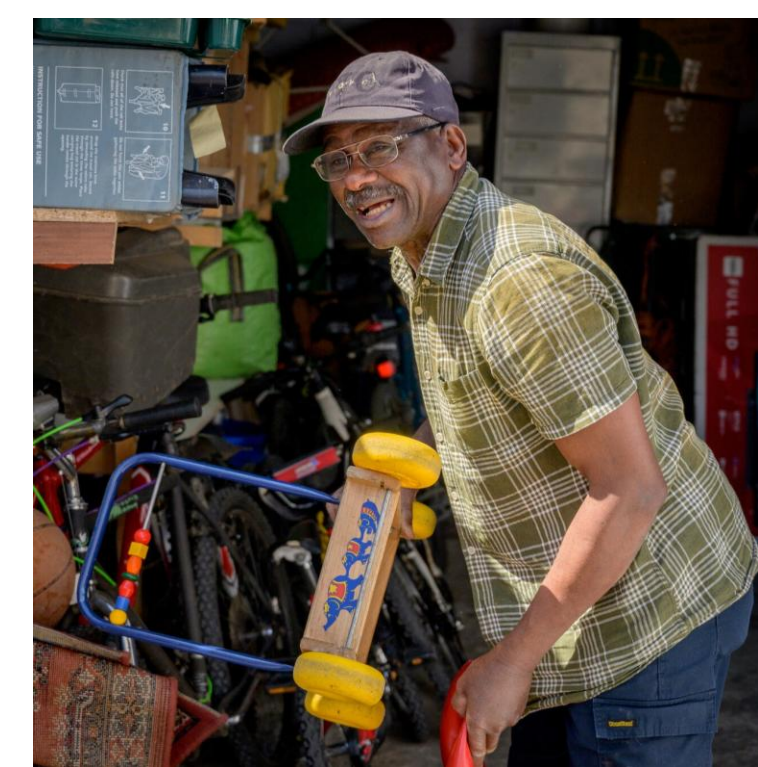


Avoid diagnostic search terms – instead, search by activities and roles.

Image credit: Age without Limits

4

Analyse the image



Look for camera angles and framings that show strength, agency and personhood.

Image credit: Age without Limits

5

Check for diversity



Check that image sets represent the breadth of community diversity.

Image credit: Age without Limits

Conclusion

- Many commonly used stock images sustain stereotypes about people living with dementia
- Careful and critical image selection is essential to challenge inherent biases

Limitations

The author's own experiences, perspectives and cultural biases influence interpretations of how power and agency is portrayed through features such as posture and facial expression.

Seeking positive, strengths-based images may not show the full diversity of people's experiences.

This scoping review was completed in a short time frame – further in-depth review may reveal additional insights.

References

Ang PS, Yeo SL, Koran L (2023). Advocating for a dementia-inclusive visual communication. *Dementia*, 22(3), 628-645.

Brookes G, Putland E, Harvey K (2021). Multimodality: Examining Visual Representations of Dementia in Public Health Discourse. *Analysing Health Communication*, 241–269

Harvey K, Brookes G (2019). Looking through dementia: What do commercial stock images tell us about aging and cognitive decline? *Qual Health Res*, 29(7), 987–1003.

Looking for inclusive image banks? Here are three examples:

Age without Limits
<https://www.agewithoutlimits.org/image-library>

Disabled and Here
<https://affecttheverb.com/disabledandhere/>

Centre for Homelessness Impact
<https://chi.resourcespace.com/pages/home.php>

Get in touch

Learn more about our “Right to rehabilitation for people with dementia” research project, including our online course, using this QR code:

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<https://www.monash.edu/medicine/national-centre-for-healthy-ageing>

