Desert Oasis Healthcare

Your Health. Your Life. Our Passion.

Closing the Gap Between Dementia Diagnosis and Care

The Context

- Underdiagnosis of dementia can mask the extent of need for condition-related management and supports.
- Improving dementia diagnosis can increase demand for care coordination and support services, thereby improving the care landscape for these patients.

The Challenge

- Of 105,000 adults 65 and older in the Greater Palm Springs area, 19,000 live with dementia or significant cognitive impairment.
- Desert Oasis Healthcare (DOHC) members account for more than half of cognitive screenings and services delivered by Alzheimer's Coachella Valley.
- In 2024, DOHC's dementia prevalence was 5.2%—below the national prevalence of 5.3% and Riverside County's rate of 8.7%.[1,2]

The Intervention

- DOHC launched a two-part initiative to improve dementia diagnosis and strengthen connections with community-based dementia resources.
- Traditional cognitive assessment methods were replaced with Neurotrack,™ an AI-enabled technology that supports DOHC primary care providers (PCPs) by standardizing testing across DOHC's Senior Wellness Clinics.
- Combined with provider education, the new technology supported DOHC's focus on early dementia diagnosis and management *(Figure 1)*.
- DOHC also adapted and launched the Alzheimer's and Dementia Care (ADC) model in its Dementia Care Clinic *(Figure 2)*.
- A clinical pharmacist serves as the "dementia care specialist" who works with a neurologist to evaluate instrumental activities of daily living, review neuropsychological testing and diagnostic laboratory and imaging results, optimize medication regimens, and link patients and families to community resources and social services.

The Results

- Increased referrals to the Dementia Care Clinic created a 300-patient backlog that prompted workflow changes.
- With proactive and consistent screening protocols and supports, dementia diagnoses increased by 46% (from 5.2% to 7.6%) between 2024 and 2025 *(Figure 3)*.
- The Clinic now primarily serves newly diagnosed patients with dementia referred from PCP offices.
  - This clinic enabled earlier intervention for neuropsychiatric symptoms and strengthened family support and caregiver access to community resources.
- Interventions included 131 referrals for social and behavioral support services, health education, home health, durable medical equipment, palliative care, and occupational, speech, and physical therapy.

Figure 1

DEMENTIA CLINIC WORKFLOW

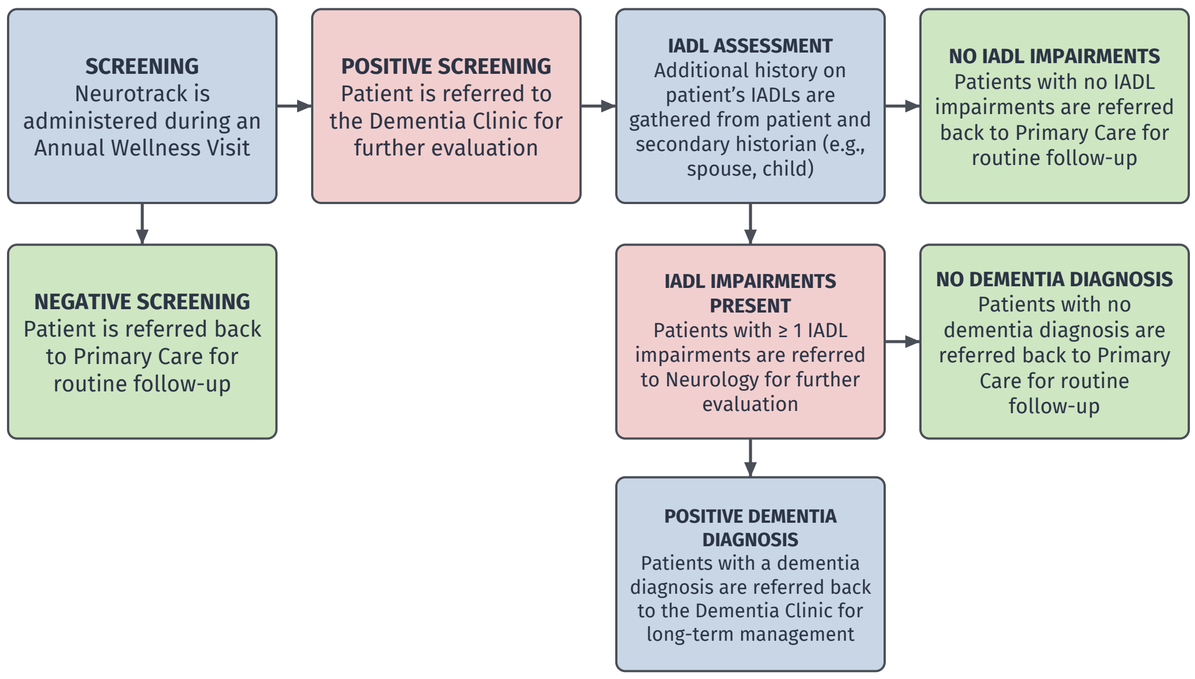


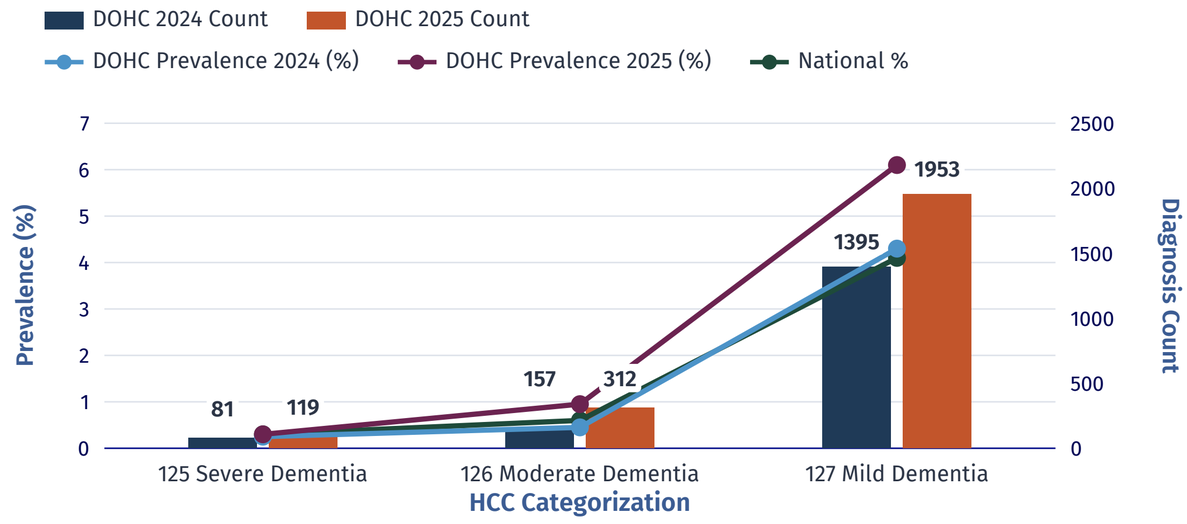
Figure 2

DEMENTIA CLINIC SERVICES

MEDICAL	• Medication Reconciliation • Initiation of dementia medications (e.g. donepezil, memantine) • Assist neurology in starting Alzheimer's infusions (e.g. lecanema • Deprescribing, especially Beers criteria medications (e.g. anticholinergics) • Routine assessment of cognitive and functional status (e.g. SLUMS, FAST) • Prompt emergency room, hospital, and skilled nursing facility stay follow-ups • Advance care planning • Referrals to palliative care and hospice as appropriate
BEHAVIORAL	• Non-pharmacotherapy recommendations for behavioral disturbances • Initiation of antidepressants and antipsychotics as appropriate • Referral to behavioral health services as appropriate
SOCIAL	• Referrals to community-based resources (e.g. support groups) • Referrals to placement services and respite care scholarships • Referrals to social services to assist with Medi-Cal and in-home supportive services applications • Adult protective services reports as appropriate

Figure 3

DEMENTIA DIAGNOSIS AND PREVALENCE 2024–2025



The Summary

DOHC's two-part initiative increased dementia diagnoses by 46% between 2024 and 2025 and resulted in 131 referrals for social, behavioral and other support services.

The Conclusion

Earlier dementia diagnosis/detection in a team-based primary care model that is aligned with a post-diagnosis, pharmacist-led care program can improve patients' access to needed resources and assist them in navigating the dementia care journey.

ABOUT US

Desert Oasis Healthcare, an affiliate of Heritage Provider Network, advances health care by providing integrated primary care and related services to more than 70,000 members and patients across the greater Coachella Valley and the Morongo Basin in Riverside and San Bernardino counties of California. Its multidisciplinary, innovative care programs focus on optimizing health outcomes and promoting wellness, reflecting DOHC's motto: "Your Health. Your Life. Our Passion."

References

[1] NORC at the University of Chicago. (2024). Dementia Datahub. Retrieved April 26, 2025 from dementiadatahub.org www.dementiadatahub.org/explore-data/state-county-dashboard.html

[2] Optum Data Analytics Compare, Version 5.1.1 – National Rate compared to CA 2024. Accessed April 19, 2025