



## Misdiagnosis in Dementia and Its Impact on Care Access

Summary based on: Giebel, C., Silva-Ribeiro, W., Watson, J., Volkmer, A., Chirico, I., Diaz, A., Heath, B., Hanna, K., & Talbot, C. (2024). A systematic review on the evidence of misdiagnosis in dementia and its impact on accessing dementia care. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, 39(10), e6158. <https://doi.org/10.1002/gps.6158>

### Overview

This 2024 systematic review synthesizes evidence on the misdiagnosis of dementia and its consequences. The review highlights how individuals with rarer dementia subtypes, such as Lewy Body dementia and frontotemporal dementia, often experience incorrect or delayed diagnoses. Misdiagnosis can lead to barriers in accessing appropriate support, increased health care costs, and added distress for individuals and their caregivers.

The study analyzed 20 research articles from 12 countries, spanning North America, Europe, Australia, Brazil, and Japan. Findings were grouped into four themes: (i) factors linked to delayed diagnosis or misdiagnosis, (ii) challenges in the diagnostic process, (iii) economic consequences, and (iv) experiences of delayed diagnosis or help seeking. The authors conclude that further investigation is urgently needed to reduce misdiagnosis and improve clinical practice for timely, accurate dementia diagnosis.

### Key Points

- People with rarer subtypes (e.g., Lewy Body dementia, frontotemporal dementia) are more likely to be misdiagnosed or experience longer delays before a correct diagnosis.
- Ethnicity (such as Hispanic and Black in the US), increased age, psychiatric symptoms (such as depression), and clinician knowledge gaps contribute to misdiagnosis.
- Misdiagnosis can result in higher healthcare costs, particularly in the United States, due to unnecessary treatments, hospitalizations, and prolonged care pathways.

- Caregivers often report distress and frustration linked to delayed or incorrect diagnoses, particularly in young-onset dementia cases.
- Misdiagnosis not only delays appropriate treatment but may also limit access to essential social care and support services.
- Evidence on the economic and emotional impacts of misdiagnosis is limited and largely US-based, highlighting the need for more international research.

---

*This brochure is part of ClarityPath's commitment to supporting caregivers and healthcare professionals with accessible, evidence-informed resources. Visit <https://claritypath.ca/> for more tools and resources.*

---