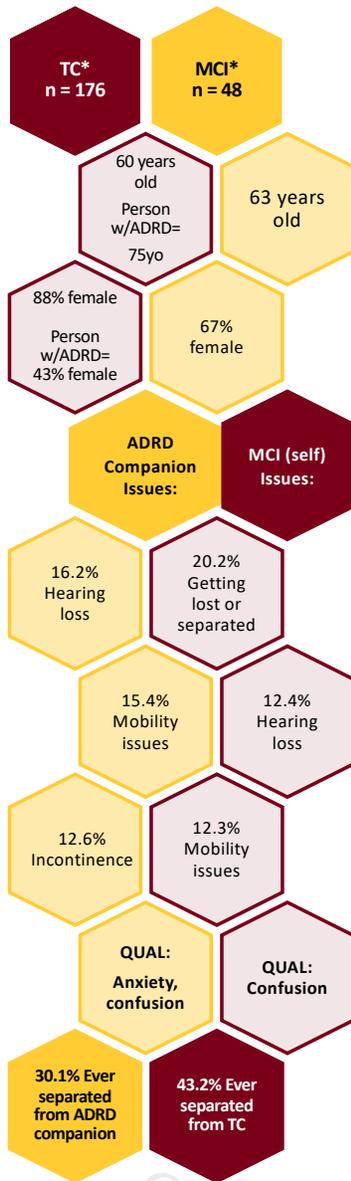


# Air Travel Experiences and Concerns of Persons Living with Dementias and Their Travel Companions

Colleen Peterson, PhD; Tamara L. Statz, MA, LMFT, FT; Sara Barsel, PhD; Robyn W. Birkeland, PhD; Joseph E. Gaugler, PhD; Dementia-Friendly Airports Working Group; Jessica M. Finlay, PhD

## Participants



## Challenges to Airport Navigation

### Security

**Anxiety**

**Separated**

**Confusing**

**Not listened to**

"I was pulled out for special screening. I told them my husband needed to come with me because he had Alzheimer's and would wander. They did not let him come with me. I was a nervous wreck trying to watch him from a distance."-TC

"I was worried she was going to be arrested for trying to grab her purse back repeatedly. They tried to get me to go thru security without her while she waited. When I tried to explain her situation, wasn't really listened to."-TC

### Navigation

**Trouble with loudspeaker announcements** (TC: 27.4%; MCI: 21.9%)

**Trouble following signs** (TC: 24.9%; MCI: 28.6%)

**Moving walkway difficult for person with dementia** (TC: 15.2%; MCI: 20.5%)

**Most trouble with walking through terminal** (TC:22.8%; MCI: 23.1%)

**Overwhelmed**

"Unable to hear clearly. Speakers were too loud and garbled. Signage assumes that you already know carry-on info and other frequent traveler details."-TC

"We didn't receive any help navigating the airport. We will use an electric cart next time, it was too overwhelming to get through the airport."-TC

### Airport Spaces

**Loud and busy**

**Trouble finding family restroom** (TC:16.4%; MCI: 9.8%)

"It's so hard to find a quiet place to eat or rest with all the noise-loud music."-MCI

"I can't remember ever seeing a family restroom where I could accompany him. Since we are of different sexes, I just had to wait outside the men's room and hope that he was able to talk care of himself or some other man might assist him if necessary."-TC

## Facilitators to Airport Navigation

### Security

**Keep together**

**Special line**

**Training**

**Compassion**

"Let person with Alzheimer's and traveling companion stay together AT ALL TIMES."-TC

"Short wait lines in PreCheck... TSA agents were very understanding and HELPFUL with letting ME help my loved one through the process with little disruption."-TC

"Separate area that is calm and quiet. Agents who are patient and kind. No yelling."-TC

**TSA Pre✓**  
Used by—TC: 32.1%; MCI 38.2%  
TSA Screening

**I SUPPORT THE SUNFLOWER FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH HIDDEN DISABILITIES**  
Recognize Identifiers

### Navigation

**Send announcements via text and better advertise apps**

**Wheelchair access most used airport service** (TC:34.0%; MCI:23.3%)

"Wheelchair assistance is terrific as they take you through the shortest (back hallways) route and to front of linesups."-TC

### Airport Spaces

**Designated, accessible quiet areas**

**More and more easily accessed family restrooms**

"A quiet room would really help."-TC

"The airlines need to advertise the fact that there is such a thing as a quiet room available. I never heard of such a thing."-MCI



\*TC = Travel companion \*MCI = Person living with mild cognitive impairment

The presentation of this research was funded by the Robert L. Kane Endowed Chair in Long-Term Care Fund.