

Partnering to Expand Reach

Benjamin Rose is a pioneering dementia care leader in Ohio, offering holistic community-based services and support to people with dementia and their caregivers. Over the past 20 years, Benjamin Rose's nationally renowned applied aging research institute (Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging) has developed and tested Benjamin Rose Institute (BRI) Care Consultation™, an evidence-based care navigation program delivered by telephone and email that links family caregivers and people living with dementia with trained Care Navigators who help them manage their dementia care. BRI Care Consultation has been proven effective in 11 research studies and was included as one of the National Dementia Care Collaborative's six dementia care models for dissemination.

Organizations that want to implement BRI Care Consultation can either become licensed to deliver the model and provide the service themselves or partner with Benjamin Rose to deliver the comprehensive suite of services on their behalf. So, when Tembo Health, a national virtual dementia care health care provider, reached out to explore a partnership, Benjamin Rose saw two significant benefits.

First, Tembo Health offers its own suite of clinical dementia care services that expanded upon what Benjamin Rose offered through BRI Care Consultation. These services included diagnostic assessments, medication management, and 24/7 access to virtual emergency medicine physicians, who were able to assess and treat a myriad of conditions including falls, infections, and behavior issues.

Second, a partnership between Benjamin Rose and Tembo Health would satisfy all of the requirements for participation in Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience (GUIDE) Model program. In joining together as partners, Benjamin Rose and Tembo Health would then be able to offer evidence-based comprehensive services through the GUIDE Model, including respite services, and expand the reach of effective dementia care to more families in need.

"Without GUIDE, there tends to be a gap between clinical dementia care and community-based dementia care," says Franklin Shen, Director of Clinical Operations at Tembo Health. "What is great about this partnership is that it allows us to think about how we can bring the community and clinical sides together to make a significant difference for caregivers and their loved ones."

Helping More People in More Places

Effective dementia care requires significant coordination among various medical, community, and family partners. This poses both an opportunity and a challenge for Tembo Health. Because it delivers services virtually, Tembo Health can reach families in need almost everywhere in the United States. However, that wide spread of availability also means that Tembo Health does not have relationships with existing community dementia care providers.

Usually, getting a strong foothold in any one community requires "a lot of Googling, a lot of networking, and a lot of relationship building," says Shen. But in Ohio, the partnership with Benjamin Rose has helped Tembo Health hit the ground running and quickly establish trust and rapport with families.

“Benjamin Rose has built that trust through years and years of experience,” says Shen. “They've done the networking. They've done the relationship building. They've built the protocols and best practices for serving and supporting caregivers. That was great for us to lean on in Ohio.”

The partnership benefits Benjamin Rose as well. Lisa Weitzman, Director of Strategic Partnerships at Benjamin Rose, adds that collaborating with Tembo Health “makes our services even more robust,” and cites 24/7 access to an available physician as a huge benefit.

“When you are caring for your spouse, and it's 3 o'clock in the morning, and they exhibit behaviors that you don't know how to manage, it is such a benefit to be able to call Tembo Health and know that you're going to talk to a physician,” says Weitzman. “Even if you never dial the number, knowing you have that access brings families so much relief.”

Caregiver support is a significant priority for both Tembo Health and Benjamin Rose. And because of their collaboration, they are able to offer a benefit under GUIDE that neither can offer individually: respite care reimbursement for caregivers.

Shen says that family caregivers often know that they need time away from their loved ones with dementia in order to recharge, but that they struggle to justify both the time and expense associated with a break. Respite care reimbursement under GUIDE provides a mechanism for families to access up to \$2,500 per year in respite services, such as in-home care providers and adult day programs. This benefit also opens the door for conversations between care navigators and family members about the importance of rest.

GUIDE's respite care reimbursement “enables caregivers to have deeper conversations around respite, and to work through the emotions affiliated with taking a break,” Shen says. “And to be fair, we were having these conversations before, but the conversation looks very different now when you can help somebody pay for that service.”

Key to Success

How have Benjamin Rose and Tembo Health made their collaboration work? Successful communication is the key. Weitzman says that both partners communicate thoroughly about the actual logistics of care coordination in an effort to produce the best possible outcomes. They consider the pathway that the family member takes from the moment they call the Benjamin Rose Care Navigator—including who that family member speaks to, and how they get the immediate answers that they need.

For example, if a question about medication arises, a Benjamin Rose Care Navigator can escalate that question to Tembo Health's clinical team. And when an after-hours call is made to the Tembo Health urgent care line, Tembo updates the patient's Benjamin Rose Care Navigator. Weitzman adds that their communication is open and honest—and that neither partner is afraid to tell the other when something could be improved, or when a specific role is unclear.

“We communicate as real partners, and I think that has enabled this partnership to be successful because we can present as one front,” she says. Ultimately, this helps families because “there's no wrong door to access services.”



Shen adds that conversations between the partners always start from a patient or family-centered perspective. And he encourages other dementia care organizations to look for community-based partners who can help expand effective dementia services to even more people.

Thanks to GUIDE, there is more visibility on this work now—and more opportunities for collaboration than ever before. For example, while the partnership between Benjamin Rose and Tembo Health is currently reaching families in Ohio, Shen and Weitzman have discussed the possibility of expanding to rural communities across the United States. Families in those communities also need dementia services, and virtual dementia care services—especially when paired with GUIDE—could fundamentally change outcomes for people with dementia and their caregivers.

“There are passionate, educated, and smart organizations in this space,” says Shen. “What’s really been beneficial for us is that there is no shortage of great partners.”

