



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

CASES OF PERSONS LIVING WITH DEMENTIA WHO GET LOST AND GO MISSING IN CANADA

May 2025



Public Safety
Canada

Sécurité publique
Canada



1. A public transit user living with Alzheimer's disease becomes disoriented navigating downtown

Personal information

Name: Armin Dabiri.

Age: 78 years old.

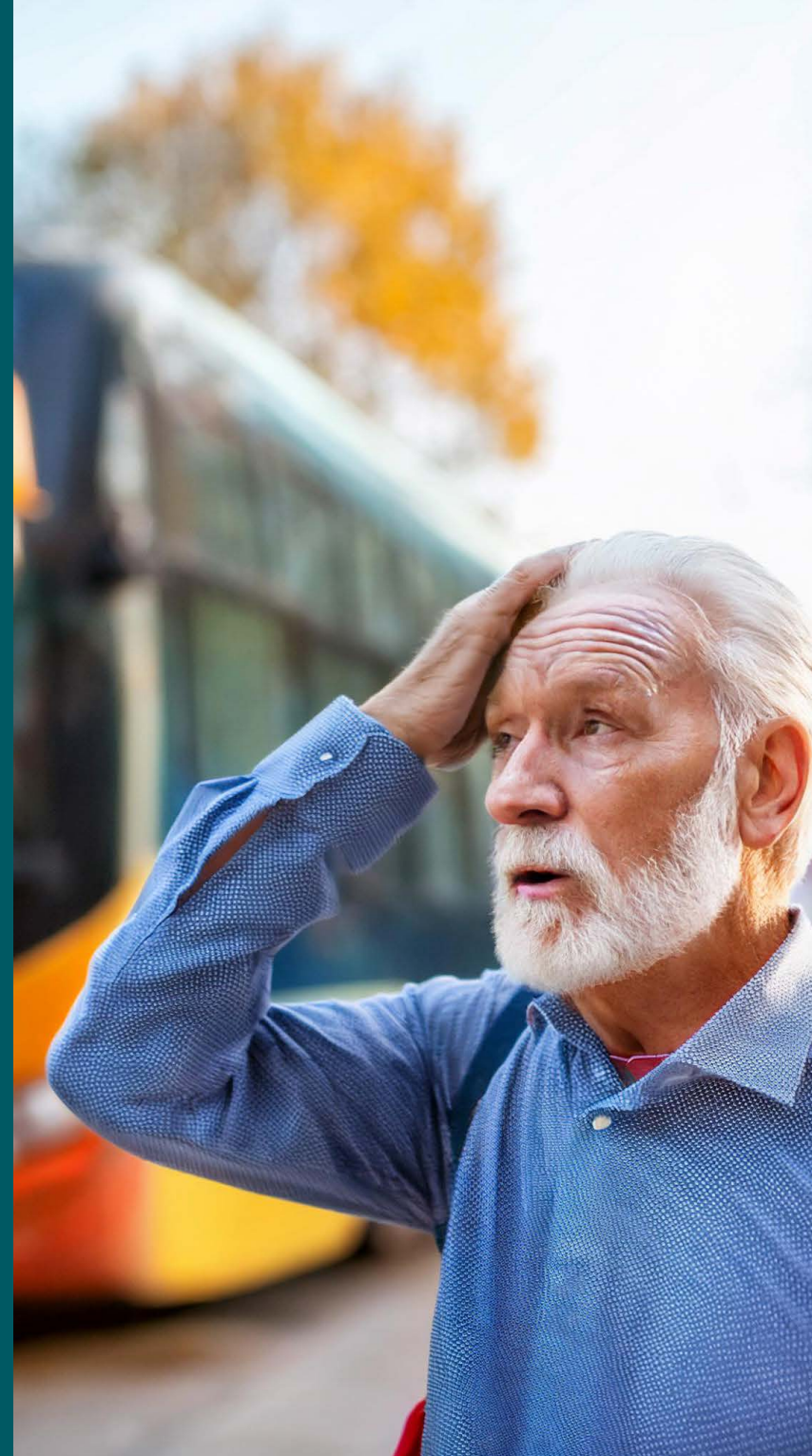
Gender: Man, pronouns are he/him.

Living situation: Two-storey home in Toronto with his 71-year-old spouse.

Social support: Spouse Leila, and two adult daughters, Maryam and Mahin.

Health history: Alzheimer's disease, depression, high blood pressure. Taking medications for these conditions.

Interests: Cooking and using public transit to explore the city.





Background

Armin's spouse

Armin's wife, Leila, has difficulties with her heart, breathing, joints, and hearing. She uses a machine to help her sleep and wears hearing aids. Lately, her joint pain makes walking harder for her.

Armin and Leila's children

Armin and Leila have three children. Maryam lives an hour away. Mahin lives in Saskatchewan, so they do not see their parents much. They both help their parents with healthcare. They took Armin to get tested for dementia and helped Leila with a hearing test. Armin and Leila also have a third child named Kian, who struggles with mental health. Kian wants to help, but has trouble keeping a job, a stable home, and does not have a phone.

History of missing incidents

About one month ago, Armin walked outside of his home in the middle of the night while still wearing his slippers and pajamas. The staff of a care home nearby brought him inside, contacted Leila, and kept him safe until she could pick him up. Understandably, Maryam and Mahin are concerned about their parents' well-being.

The day of the incident

– Getting lost

1. Resting after a long day

After a long day, Armin and Leila relax at home. They cooked a meal and had friends over for dinner. Armin feels calm and happy, which makes Leila grateful because he has been sad since he was diagnosed with dementia.

It is 6:00 pm, and Leila's knees hurt from standing all day. She asks Armin if they can go upstairs to watch TV, and he says yes. Leila is glad to take a break because taking care of Armin has made her tired, and she has not had much time for herself.

2. Armin goes downstairs

Armin wants to watch TV, but he is thirsty. He tells Leila he is going downstairs for water. Leila decides to close her eyes for a bit, thinking Armin will come back soon. She turns on her noisy breathing machine and falls asleep.

3. Armin leaves the house

Twenty minutes later, Leila hears the home security alarm beeping, which means the front door is open. Armin does not have a phone, so Leila hurries downstairs to look for him. She sees Armin's cane is gone and the door is wide open.



The day of the incident

– Being found

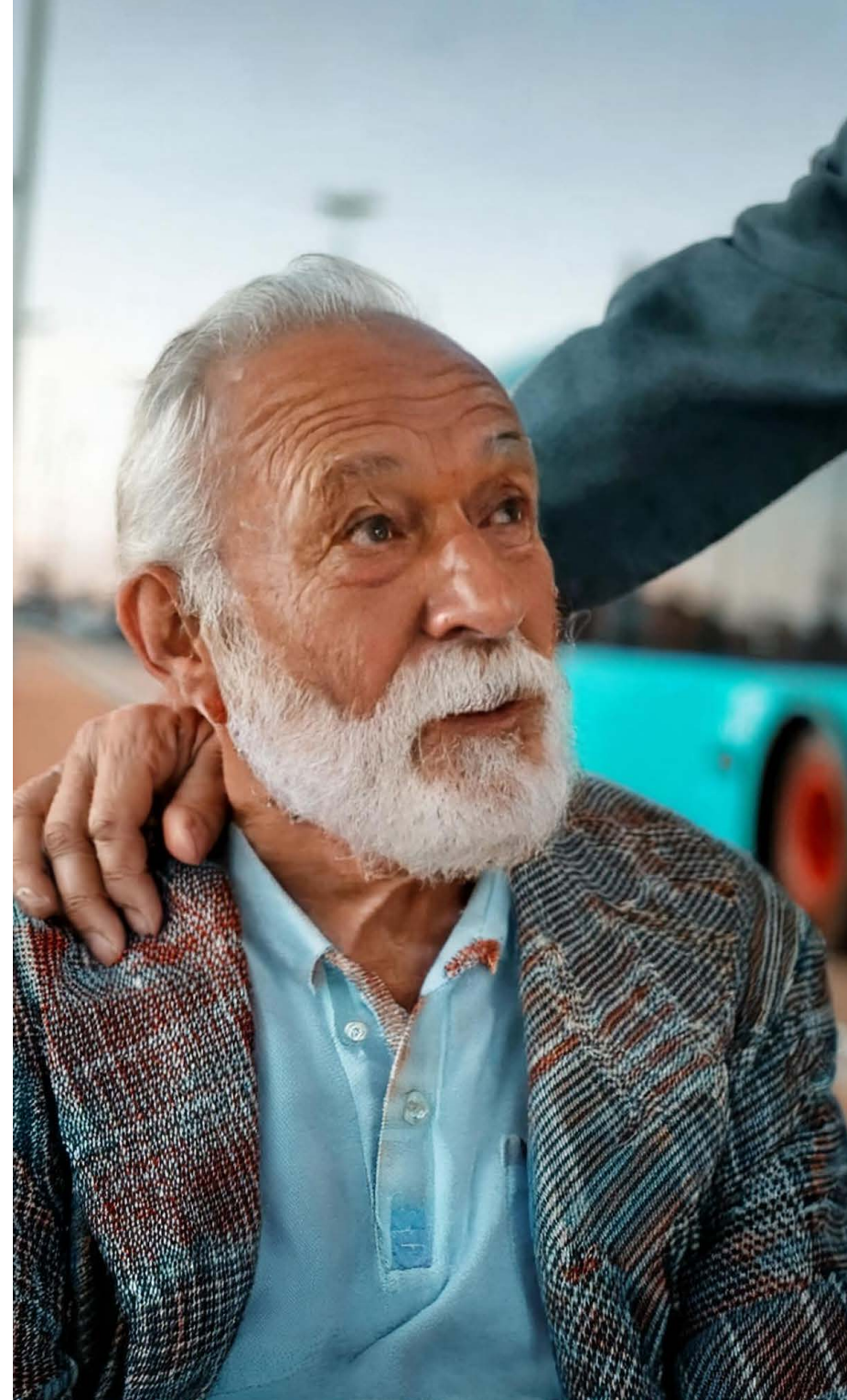
1. Leila searches the neighbourhood

Leila looks for Armin and asks people walking by if they have seen him but nobody has. Leila feels upset and starts crying because she worries that Armin is lost and missing. She knows this is an emergency and calls 911.

2. A neighbour finds Armin

Darrell, a neighbour, is walking when they see an older man with a cane heading towards an alley near a bus stop. The man looks confused and is pacing. Darrell approaches him, introduces himself, and asks if he needs help. After a pause, the man says his name is Armin and mumbles that he is unsure of where he is and that he is looking for his wife.

Darrell notices Armin is wearing a MedicAlert® Foundation Canada bracelet with a blue emblem and a 1-800 emergency number inscribed on it. They call the number and get connected to Armin's wife, Leila.



After the incident

Later that night, Leila calls Maryam and Mahin to tell them what happened. Maryam is concerned that their mom is dealing with too much. This is not the first time Armin got lost. Leila is grateful the alarm woke her up, but Maryam thinks her mom should not rely on the alarm. They talked before about getting help for their parents, but they worry their parents do not want help. Tomorrow, Maryam will visit to organize more help for them at home.

Resources

Click the link to watch a video from Dementia Network Calgary which outlines a missing incident involving a person living with dementia and how someone can help in that situation: dementianetworkcalgary.ca/

Calgary Community Coordinated Response to Missing Seniors is an Action Team with Age-Friendly Calgary. They have created a helpful resource describing what you can do when you find a person who may be missing: missingseniors.ca/found-person/

MedicAlert is a service that provides emergency medical information. The bracelet should be worn at all times so that first responders and medical personnel can access a person's emergency contacts and medical information.





Resources

Toolkit to manage the risk of getting lost and going missing for people living with dementia.

This toolkit contains strategies to help with the common concerns of people living with dementia and their care partners regarding the risks of becoming lost.

Emergency card

People living with dementia can carry an “In Case of Emergency” card. It has important information to help them if they go missing. This card was made by the **Calgary Missing Older adult Resource Network**, see page 16.

The Herbert Protocol

Important details about the person at risk can be gathered in The Herbert Protocol. This information can help first responders when someone is missing. Keep this information at home on your fridge and give it to care partners. Click this link to access the ‘**Resource Guide for Older Adults at Risk of Going Missing**’; fill out the form on pages 15-20.

Safety and leisure activities

Balancing leisure time with safety can be challenging. **The Canadian Guideline for Safe Wandering** provides strategies to promote safe wandering and manage the risk of getting lost when doing leisure activities.

Driving with dementia

It can be challenging to drive a car when the driver has a hard time remembering, navigating, and attending to the environment. This **Driving and Dementia Roadmap** includes safety considerations related to driving with dementia.

In Case of Emergency	
Full Name	_____
Date of Birth	_____ Blood type _____
Address	_____
Cell	_____ Work _____ Home _____
Current Meds	_____
Conditions	_____
Physician	_____ Phone _____
Allergy/additional info	_____
In Case of Emergency	
Emergency Contact #1	_____
Relationship	_____ Work Phone _____
Cell Phone	_____ Work Phone _____
Emergency Contact #1	_____
Relationship	_____ Work Phone _____
Cell Phone	_____ Work Phone _____
Additional Info	_____
_____ Last updated _____	

Locator devices

Locator devices help people living with dementia share their location with family in case they are lost. They may also help the police find people should they go missing. The **Alzheimer Society of Canada** shares more information about the purposes of locator devices. The **University of Waterloo Aging and Innovation Research Program** outlines features of locator devices, including cost and battery life.

What to do if you find a missing person

A missing incident is an emergency. Call police and ask the operator or service how you can help. **A video from Dementia Network Calgary** outlines a missing incident involving a person living with dementia and how to help.

Links

- **Toolkit** to manage the risk of getting lost and going missing for people living with dementia, made by the University of Waterloo. <https://uwaterloo.ca/managing-risks-of-disappearance-in-persons-living-with-dementia/toolkit-0>
- **“In Case of Emergency” card** made by Calgary Missing Older Adult Resource Network. See page 14. <https://missingseniors.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Resource-guide-for-people-at-risk-of-going-missing.pdf>
- **The Herbert Protocol** described by Calgary Missing Older Adult Resource Network. See pages 15-20. <https://missingseniors.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Resource-guide-for-people-at-risk-of-going-missing.pdf>
- **The Canadian Guideline for Safe Wandering.** https://canadiansafewandering.ca/#more_information
- **The Driving and Dementia Roadmap.** <https://www.drivinganddementia.ca/>
- **Locator device overview**, as described by the Alzheimer Society of Canada. <https://alzheimer.ca/en/help-support/im-caring-person-living-dementia/ensuring-safety-security/tracking-devices>
- **Locator device features**, as described by the University of Waterloo Aging and Innovation Research Program. <https://uwaterloo.ca/aging-innovation-research-program/locator-devices>
- **What to do if you find a missing person.** Dementia Network Calgary’s video dementianetworkcalgary.ca/



For more information

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