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A flag flies in front of the Fairview Developmental Center, an overflow hospital facility that has added a unit for COVID-19 patients with dementia, in Costa Mesa, Calif., on Dec. 29, 2020. (John Fredricks/The Epoch Times)

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Fairview Developmental Center Opens Unit for COVID-19 Patients With Dementia

BY ALEX MURASHKO | December 29, 2020 Updated: December 29, 2020

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Fairview Developmental Center in [Costa Mesa](#), California, began accepting

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COVID-19 patients with [dementia](#) Dec. 28, as [Orange County](#) officials attempted to lighten the strain on local hospitals overbooked as the result of the surging pandemic.

The center has created a special ward for the patients, with 50 beds housed in a separate building from its other patients. Fairview recently reopened as part of the county's efforts to expand hospital facilities and provide overflow locations, offering up to 180 beds for people infected with the disease in its main unit.

The special ward came into fruition as the result of a collaboration between the nonprofit organization Alzheimer's Orange County, the Orange County Health Care Agency, and the California Department of Developmental Services, which manages the Fairview campus.

Vic Mazmanian, who has been a [caregiver advocate](#) for people in Orange County with dementia and Alzheimer's disease for over 30 years, called the setup "a win-win situation all the way around."

"That's a relief for the hospitals. It's a relief for the families. And a relief for the people with dementia, because someone is able to assist them in being COVID-19 safe so the disease or stress doesn't get worse," Mazmanian told The Epoch Times.

Hospitals are eager to have COVID-19 patients with Alzheimer's or dementia placed elsewhere at the appropriate time because people with these diseases often have cognitive impairment, and can be prone to not putting on their masks or can be unaware of how they may be spreading the virus, Mazmanian said.

"This population [people afflicted with Alzheimer's or dementia] doesn't get addressed very often. It gets lumped in with a bunch of other diseases and issues. It's so different from anything else."

The Fairview facility is equipped with alarms, cameras, and specialized staff, according to Alzheimer's Orange County CEO Jim McAleer, who helped prepare the unit over the past two weeks. McAleer told The Orange County Register that the unit was created to take people suffering from dementia, who need special care and may otherwise live in a memory care or nursing facility, out of the hospital for convalescence, when they are well enough to leave but may still be contagious.

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For many years, the Fairview Developmental Center's multi-building campus was used to treat and house people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Part of the campus has been used as an auxiliary care site during the pandemic, after the last patient residents moved out earlier this year.

Although Alzheimer's or dementia has been diagnosed among people who are not necessarily considered old, the risk for severe illness with COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at highest risk. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), eight of 10 COVID-19 deaths reported in the United States have been adults 65 years old and older.

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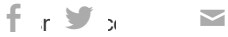
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