A new dementia app could prove a vital tool in supporting patients and families from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, according to a leading nurse.

The Culturally Sensitive Reminiscence Tool helps healthcare staff and families support BME patients with dementia.

Admiral Nurse Dementia Helpline deputy clinical lead Paulette Winchester-Joseph said a lack of resources mean BME families can experience difficulties accessing dementia support.

‘This app could be vital for families trying to bridge the gap between getting a diagnosis and support post-diagnosis,’ she said. ‘It can also be part of the care and support nurses offer.’

‘Dementia is unique to everyone, so this piece of technology may not be suitable for all families,’ said ‘Specialist dementia Admiral Nurses can help families see what is most appropriate for their circumstances.’

The app contains resources tailored specifically for African and Caribbean communities, including music, videos, photos and games. Family members can record their own memories on the app to help healthcare workers understand a patient’s background.

There are also plans underway to include the South Asian and Irish communities in the app.

The app was designed by brothers Karl and Junior Wilson when they realised their mother, who lived with dementia until she died in 2016, had no culturally sensitive resources in her care home.

Junior Wilson said: ‘There is a lack of relevant culturally sensitive support for people with dementia and also those living in isolation, which can lead to depression. Our app is a solution to at least some of these problems.’

Ms Winchester-Joseph welcomed the use of the app but warned against a one-size-fits-all approach.

‘Dementia is unique to everyone, so this piece of technology may not be suitable for all families,’ she said. ‘Specialist dementia Admiral Nurses can help families see what is most appropriate for their circumstances.’

The app is free for families and there are subscription packages for care homes and care groups.

Find out more at pearlsupportnetwork.org.uk

Primary care teams can cut admissions

Primary care teams focusing on preventing avoidable emergency hospital admissions of care home residents should be introduced nationwide, the RCN has said.

The college was responding to a NHS researchers’ report revealing that 41% of emergency hospital admissions from care homes in England could be avoided.

The report from the Improvement Analytics Unit, a joint initiative between NHS England and the Health Foundation, highlights admissions for potentially avoidable conditions such as chest infections, pressure ulcers and urinary tract infections.

RCN head of nursing practice Wendy Preston said: ‘Dedicated primary care teams including advanced practice nurses can promptly assess and treat residents who fall ill or injure themselves. A few areas have such teams, but we need them to be rolled out nationwide.’

Training and equipment

The researchers found almost one in 12 emergency hospital admissions was for a person living in a care home – an estimated 192,000 each year.

Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust director of nursing and quality Anna Morgan said investment in training and equipment for care homes could help avoid hospital admissions.

‘Care home staff know their residents’ needs better than any other professional,’ she said. ‘With the right support and investment into care homes they would be in a better position to implement these findings.’

The NHS Long Term Plan, published in January this year, commits the NHS to improving support in care homes and to roll out the Enhanced Health in Care Homes framework in England.