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***Our Mission:*** Helping to prepare Iowa's health practitioners to care for our growing population of elders. *E-NEWS* is one of our methods of teaching through technology.

Each month, *E-NEWS* delivers abstracts from current multidisciplinary healthcare journal articles related to a specific geriatric topic. This month's *E-NEWS* focuses on PROMOTING INVOLVEMENT IN MEANINGFUL ACTIVITY.

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## PROMOTING INVOLVEMENT IN MEANINGFUL ACTIVITY

**In this issue of the *E-NEWS*, you will find abstracts for:**

- An article that describes the process of building a multi-level intervention to provide a sustainable activity-based model for people with dementia in long-term care.
  - A study that investigates whether the use of tailored activities manages neuropsychiatric behaviors in people with dementia and reduces caregiver burden.
  - A study that explores concepts of meaningful activity as defined by older adults with dementia living in nursing homes, staff, and family carers.
  - An article that discusses prescribing activities that engage passive nursing home residents with dementia.
  - A study that tests the efficacy of theory-based activities for behavioral symptoms of dementia.
  - A study that seeks to determine what constitutes meaningful activity from the perspective of people with dementia.
  - A study that examines a therapeutic recreation program for nursing home residents with dementia and accompanying agitation and/or anxiety.
  - An article that addresses procedural memory and emotional attachment in Alzheimer's disease and the implications for meaningful and engaging activities.
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- Brooker DJ, Woolley RJ. Enriching opportunities for people living with dementia: the development of a blueprint for a sustainable activity-based model. *Aging Ment Health*. 2007 Jul;11(4):371-83.

The aim of this paper is to describe the process of building a multi-level intervention called the Enriched Opportunities Programme, the objective of which is to provide a sustainable activity-based model for people with dementia living in long-term care. It is hypothesized that five key elements need to work together to bring about a sustainable activity-based model of care. These elements are specialist expertise-the staff role of Locksmith was developed as part of this program; individualized assessment and case work; an activity and occupation program; staff training; and management and leadership. These elements working together are known as the Enriched Opportunities Programme. This paper reports on the processes undertaken to develop Enriched Opportunities from its inception to the present, and focuses on lessons learnt from the literature, an expert working group and action research in four UK study sites. A blueprint for evaluation in other long-term care facilities is described.



- Gitlin LN, Winter L, Burke J, Chernett N, Dennis MP, Hauck WW. Tailored activities to manage neuropsychiatric behaviors in persons with dementia and reduce caregiver burden: a randomized pilot study. *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry*. 2008 Mar;16(3):229-39.

OBJECTIVE: To test whether the Tailored Activity Program (TAP) reduces dementia-related neuropsychiatric behaviors, promotes activity engagement, and enhances caregiver well-being. DESIGN: Prospective, two-group (treatment, wait-list control), randomized, controlled pilot study with 4 months as main trial endpoint. At 4 months, controls received the TAP intervention and were reassessed 4 months later. SETTING: Patients' homes. PARTICIPANTS: Sixty dementia patients and family caregivers. INTERVENTION: The eight-session occupational therapy intervention involved neuropsychological and functional testing, selection, and customization of activities to match capabilities identified in testing, and instruction to caregivers in use of activities. MEASUREMENTS: Behavioral occurrences, activity engagement, and quality of life in dementia patients; objective and subjective burden and skill enhancement in caregivers. RESULTS: At 4 months, compared with controls, intervention caregivers reported reduced frequency of problem behaviors, and specifically for shadowing and repetitive questioning, and greater activity engagement including the ability to keep busy. Fewer intervention caregivers reported agitation or argumentation. Caregiver benefits included fewer hours doing things and being on duty, greater mastery, self-efficacy, and skill enhancement. Wait-list control participants following intervention showed similar benefits for reductions in behavioral frequency and caregiver hours doing things for the patient and mastery. Caregivers with depressed symptoms derived treatment benefits similar to nondepressed caregivers. CONCLUSIONS: Tailoring activities to the capabilities of dementia patients and training families in activity use resulted in clinically relevant benefits for patients and caregivers. Treatment minimized trigger behaviors for nursing home placement and reduced objective caregiver burden. Noteworthy is that depressed caregivers effectively engaged in and benefited from the intervention.



- Harmer BJ, Orrell M. What is meaningful activity for people with dementia living in care homes? A comparison of the views of older people with dementia, staff and family carers. *Aging Ment Health*. 2008 Sep;12(5):548-58.

BACKGROUND: Older people with dementia living in care homes often lack appropriate activities. Although homes are expected to offer a range of activities to meet residents' needs, little is known about what makes activities meaningful for people with dementia. This study explores concepts of meaningful activity, as defined by older people with dementia living in care homes, staff and family carers. METHOD: This qualitative study used focus groups including 17 residents, 15 staff and eight family carers from three care homes. Transcripts of the groups were subjected to thematic content analysis using a grounded theory approach. RESULTS: Four activity themes emerged -- 'reminiscence', 'family and social', 'musical' and 'individual'. There were also two related themes -- 'lack of meaningful activity' and 'what makes activity meaningful'. Residents found meaning in activities that addressed their psychological and social needs, which related to the quality of the experience of an activity rather than specific types of activities. In contrast, staff and family carers viewed activities that maintained physical abilities as meaningful. CONCLUSION: People with dementia, staff and carers had

differing views about what made activities meaningful. Organizational limitations and social beliefs limited the provision of meaningful activities for this population. The study also indicates areas for improving activity provision in care homes.



- Kolanowski A, Buettner L. Prescribing activities that engage passive residents. An innovative method. *J Gerontol Nurs.* 2008 Jan;34(1):13-8.

Individuals with dementia are often passive, which places them at risk for further cognitive and functional decline. Recreational activities have been used in research to reduce passive behaviors, but systematic reviews of these studies have found modest effect sizes for many activities. In this article, we describe the further theoretical development of an innovative method for prescribing activities that have a high likelihood of engaging nursing home residents who are passive and present examples for research application and clinical practice. This method may increase the effect size of activity interventions and encourage more widespread adoption of nonpharmacological interventions in practice.



- Kolanowski AM, Litaker M, Buettner L. Efficacy of theory-based activities for behavioral symptoms of dementia. *Nurs Res.* 2005 Jul-Aug;54(4):219-28.

BACKGROUND: Agitation and passivity are behavioral symptoms exhibited by 90% of nursing home residents with dementia. They account for many poor health outcomes, caregiver burden, and increased costs of long-term care. OBJECTIVES: This study tested the efficacy of recreational activities derived from the Need-driven Dementia-compromised Behavior (NDB) model: activities matched to skill level only; activities matched to style of interest only; and a combination of both (NDB-derived) for responding to the behavioral symptoms of dementia. METHODS: Thirty participants were randomly assigned to 1 of 6 possible order-of-condition presentations in this crossover experimental design with repeated measures of dependent variables. Trained research assistants, blind to condition match, implemented each condition for 12 consecutive days. Measures of engagement (time on task and participation), affect, and behavioral symptoms (agitation and passivity) were taken from videotape recordings of each session. Mood was measured with the Dementia Mood Picture Test. The primary analysis method was mixed-model analysis of variance. RESULTS: Significantly more time on task, greater participation, more positive affect, and less passivity were found under NDB-derived and matched to interest only treatments compared with the matched to skill level only treatment or baseline. Agitation and negative affect improved under all treatments compared with baseline. There was no significant change in mood. DISCUSSION: The NDB-derived activities are tailored to meet individual needs and improve behavioral symptoms associated with dementia. These findings help to explain factors that produce behavioral symptoms and the mechanisms that underlie their successful treatment.



- Phinney A, Chaudhury H, O'Connor DL. Doing as much as I can do: the meaning of activity for people with dementia. *Aging Ment Health.* 2007 Jul;11(4):384-93.

While it is assumed that persons with dementia benefit from being involved in meaningful activity, research examining this claim is limited. In particular, how individuals with dementia perceive this involvement is poorly understood. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to determine what constitutes meaningful activity from the perspective of persons with dementia, and to explore how they perceive its significance in their lives. We conducted an interpretive phenomenological analysis of multiple interviews and participant observation conducted with eight community-dwelling elders with mild to moderate dementia. For several participants, the single most important driving force in their lives was being active, doing as much as they possibly could. They were involved in a wide range of activities including leisure pastimes, household chores, work-related endeavors, and social involvements. These activities were meaningful in three ways: Through their involvement, participants experienced feelings of pleasure and enjoyment; felt a sense of connection and belonging; and retained a sense of autonomy and personal identity. Findings suggest that familiarity of the social and physical environment promotes involvement in activities. This provides a sense of continuity for people with dementia, with implications for their quality of life and personhood. Further implications of these findings for dementia care and future research are discussed.



- Putman L, Wang JT. The Closing Group: Therapeutic recreation for nursing home residents with dementia and accompanying agitation and/or anxiety. *Am J Alzheimers Dis Other Demen.* 2007 Jun-Jul;22(3):167-75.

Long-term care residents who have a dementia diagnosis could account for as much 50% of a nursing home's population. Often residents with dementia experience a distressing behavioral symptom that affects the resident experiencing the symptom(s), other nursing home residents, visitors, and staff. The Closing Group intervention was developed as a nonpharmacological alternative that aims to reduce agitation and anxiety, increase socialization, decrease restraint use, and decrease antipsychotic drug use for selected residents with a dementia diagnosis. The program was based on an understanding of the contributing factors to agitation and anxiety, the nursing home environment as it relates to behavior, and the offering of resident-driven recreational activities. The purpose of this 2-year study was, with use of multiple measures, to examine the extent to which the Closing Group intervention has met its goals. A sample of 16 long-term care residents was offered attendance at the group. Findings in the area of reducing agitation and anxiety were encouraging to the extent that further study with larger samples is needed.



- Vance DE, Moore BS, Farr KF, Struzick T. Procedural memory and emotional attachment in Alzheimer disease: implications for meaningful and engaging activities. *J Neurosci Nurs.* 2008 Apr;40(2):96-102.

With an increasing number of older adults being diagnosed with Alzheimer disease, the need to find meaningful and enjoyable activities in which they can successfully engage is important for providing good quality of life while preventing behavioral difficulties that often accompany this diagnosis. Dementia-related neuropsychological impairments hinder engagement in a variety of enjoyable activities. For many older adults with Alzheimer disease who have been involved in a religious tradition, well-rehearsed rituals and emotionally salient behaviors can be employed well into the later stages of this disease. An approach called procedural and emotional religious activity therapy, or PERAT, can provide enjoyable and meaningful activities that may reduce agitation and increase quality of life for patients as well as for caregivers. Knowledge about the neuropsychology of procedural and emotional memory is needed to understand how PERAT works.



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*Next Month's Issue:*

Update on Diabetes Management

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