

Study Summary

Title: An Enhanced Dining Program for Residents with Dementia

Investigators: Athina Perivolaris, RN, BScN, MN
Kate Wilkinson, RN, BScN, MHSc Health Administration
Sylvia Buchanan, RN, BScN
Chantale LeClerc, RN, MSc, GNC(C)

Background: The dining experience in long-term care facilities is often provided in a manner that fails to take into consideration the individual with dementia and his or her unique needs. The experience is often structured according to a rigid schedule that is provider-focused. Meals are often eaten in places where inappropriate levels of stimulation result in challenging behaviours and excess disability (Dawson et al 1993). Staff feels pressured to meet this schedule resulting in task-focused care rather than promoting abilities and a pleasurable dining experience.

Purpose: The purpose of this pilot is to evaluate the effectiveness of a new dining program that provides a homelike environment and staff education regarding best practices related to feeding and interventions to enhance residents' self-feeding abilities. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What is the effect of a Dining Program on residents' intake, self-feeding abilities, and behaviour/agitation level?
- 2) To what extent are staff able to implement the Dining Program?
- 3) What are the residents' and staff levels of satisfaction?

Study Design: The conceptual frameworks of Enablement and Effectiveness Research guide this study. The Enablement Perspective (Dawson, Wells & Kline, 1993) orients the study and care of residents with cognitive impairment toward a focus on human abilities. Learning to identify abilities and attempting to consider underlying causes of observed behaviours may result in decreased custodial care and prevent excess disability. Enablement promotes meaningful life experiences by providing opportunity for residents to engage in the daily life course of living according to their abilities. The second conceptual framework will guide the evaluation of the dining program. This evaluation is intended to determine how well the proposed dining program can be implemented in a real world context, that is, an in-patient unit.

Study Method: A quasi-experiment design using repeated measures will be used. Outcome data will be collected at three points in time: prior to the initiation of the dining program, after residents are introduced to the new dining environment (week 6), and at the end of the dining program when residents are eating in the new dining environment and staff have received education (week 12).

Participant Selection: The study participants include 12 residents with early to moderate stage dementia residing in two cognitive support units in the host facility and 6 of their staff members (nurses, activity aides). Written consents will be obtained from all participants or their substitute decision makers