Creating Opportunities for Mental Fitness in Residents with Dementia at Belmont Village Senior Living

Daina Mathew, OTD/S
Expert Mentor: Christie Hendrich, BFA; Faculty Mentor: Elena Espiritu, OTD, OTR/L, BCPR
Belmont University, School of Occupational Therapy

Mission

Belmont Village will be the leading developer and operator of Assisted Living communities in the nation’s largest cities. We set a standard for operating excellence and value. Our locations, buildings, and systems are designed to foster an environment where all community members – seniors, their families, employees, and investors – can learn, grow, live well, and prosper.

Identified Needs

- In order to identify the needs of the facility, I conducted a needs assessment by interviewing the activities coordinator, memory care program director, enrichment leaders, caregivers, family members and residents in both Circle of Friends and the Neighborhood.
  - Circle of Friends is a memory program within the senior living center for residents with mild-moderate dementia.
  - The Neighborhood is a secured wing of the senior living center for residents with moderate-severe dementia.
- A part of this needs assessment included creating “Life Stories” of each resident, by having family members fill out a Life Stories handout pictured below.
- Through my interviews with the staff I was able to conclude the needs of the facility – to create more opportunities for mental fitness in the daily routine of the residents.
- Belmont Village has a specialized memory care program in which they promote the implementation of activities that exercise the six domains of mental fitness:
  - Critical thinking
  - Memory-body movement
  - New learning
  - Step-by-step sequencing
  - Long-term memory
  - Math and problem solving
- Additional needs included expanding the volunteer program and educating family members of the various forms of dementia.

Objectives

1. Needs Assessment
   - Used to identify the gap in the services provided and the services needed
2. Summary of Pertinent Literature
   - i.e. AOTA Practice Guidelines for Adults with Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders, other AOTA official documents, articles on the role of occupational therapy in assisted living facilities, the role of occupational therapy for dementia, etc.
3. Create Dementia Resource Guide
   - Used to educate the family members of residents with dementia of the various forms of dementia
4. Expand Volunteer Program
   - This connection would provide students experience with this population while providing the facility student volunteers to adhere to the interests of the residents based on their life stories. Some activity boxes are seasonal and others can used all year-round. All activity boxes are equipped with an instruction sheet, which includes a picture and description of the activity, how it can be graded up for higher-functioning residents, how it can be graded down for lower-functioning residents, and what domain of mental fitness the activity targets. For example, there is a dog bowl bean bag toss that falls under the domain of memory-body movement. The purpose is to toss the bean bags into the bean bowl. For higher functioning residents, this activity can be graded up by requiring the residents to keep track of the points on the bowls his/her bean bags landed into until he/she reaches i.e. 50 points. This then also incorporates the domain of math and problem solving skills. For lower functioning residents, the activity can be graded down by only requiring the resident to correctly toss i.e. 3 bean bags into any dog bowl. In order to expand the volunteer program, I reached out to local high schools, colleges, universities and churches. I received great feedback, created a contact list, sent out Belmont Village volunteer forms, and scheduled volunteers for one-time, weekly, and monthly volunteer dates. In order to create a resource book, I studied the available literature to learn about the different forms of dementia. I compiled what I’d learned into a binder that is now used to educate the families of residents at Belmont Village on the specific type of dementia their loved one’s been diagnosed with, versus other forms of dementia. In order to analyze the current practice in other living facilities, I visited both Morning Pointe of Franklin and Abe’s Garden and met with their memory care program director. These meetings shed light into new approaches to use for effective interactions with residents with dementia. Finally, throughout the course of my experiential component, I watched numeral documentaries and videos and read blogs and books about living and dealing with dementia. This helped me gain a lived experience of the disease, which in turn helped me interact with the residents and their family members with better understanding.

Outcomes

Based on my research of best practice for individuals with dementia, the six domains of mental fitness, and Teepa Snow’s dementia and Alzheimer’s care expertise, I created a multitude of activity boxes. These activity boxes all fall under one or more domain of mental fitness and adhere to the interests of the residents based on their life stories. Some activity boxes are seasonal and others can used all year-round. All activity boxes are equipped with an instruction sheet, which includes a picture and description of the activity, how it can be graded up for higher-functioning residents, how it can be graded down for lower-functioning residents, and what domain of mental fitness the activity targets. For example, there is a dog bowl bean bag toss that falls under the domain of memory-body movement. The purpose is to toss the bean bags into the bean bowl. For higher functioning residents, this activity can be graded up by requiring the residents to keep track of the points on the bowls his/her bean bags landed into until he/she reaches i.e. 50 points. This then also incorporates the domain of math and problem solving skills. For lower functioning residents, the activity can be graded down by only requiring the resident to correctly toss i.e. 3 bean bags into any dog bowl. In order to expand the volunteer program, I reached out to local high schools, colleges, universities and churches. I received great feedback, created a contact list, sent out Belmont Village volunteer forms, and scheduled volunteers for one-time, weekly, and monthly volunteer dates. In order to create a resource book, I studied the available literature to learn about the different forms of dementia. I compiled what I’d learned into a binder that is now used to educate the families of residents at Belmont Village on the specific type of dementia their loved one’s been diagnosed with, versus other forms of dementia. In order to analyze the current practice in other living facilities, I visited both Morning Pointe of Franklin and Abe’s Garden and met with their memory care program director. These meetings shed light into new approaches to use for effective interactions with residents with dementia. Finally, throughout the course of my experiential component, I watched numeral documentaries and videos and read blogs and books about living and dealing with dementia. This helped me gain a lived experience of the disease, which in turn helped me interact with the residents and their family members with better understanding.

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