



CONNECTING MINDS

DEMENTIA CARE NEWSLETTER

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Considerations for the Holidays for Staff Working with Persons with Dementia and their Families

MAREP, Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program, University of Waterloo

- ◆ Holidays may be a joyous celebration for some and distressing or sad for others. Some clients/residents may have family or friends who visit and others may be alone. Be sensitive to the needs and feelings of persons with dementia at this time of year.
- ◆ Be respectful and take the time to learn about the person with dementia—their preferences, culture, religion and ethnicity. Provide opportunities for persons with dementia to celebrate the holidays according to their own preferences. Invite clients/residents, whether living at home or in the community, to participate in holiday and other recreational festivities as appropriate.
- ◆ Families can be asked to share photo albums of previous holiday celebrations which can often assist with a relaxing form of reminiscence. For some people, playing familiar holiday movies and holiday music can be comforting. This can be a helpful strategy for persons who are restless during evening/overnight shifts.
- ◆ Where appropriate, holiday decorating can be used both as an enjoyable activity or a topic of conversation. Sharing holiday practices and traditions from a person's country of birth can be a meaningful exchange for both staff and persons with dementia.
- ◆ Pay attention to the person sitting alone in their room or who does not get visitors. Providing them with a holiday card (e.g., Christmas, Chanukah) or seasonal plant may bring cheer to them — take the time to stop by and visit those who may need comfort or would enjoy a smiling face.
- ◆ Do consider the noise level and multiple distractions that can impact upon a person with dementia with possible increased activity and visits to a person's home or long-term care residence.
- ◆ Be considerate of the words “do you remember.” Staff may explore broader reflections like “how do you like to spend the holiday?” or “Tell me about what you enjoy about holidays.” If need be, ask closed ended questions like “did you used to skate/go on sleigh rides/cook a big meal during the holidays?”
- ◆ Be sensitive to family members who can no longer celebrate the holidays as they once did. This may be a difficult time for them — provide as much continuity in the lives of the person with dementia and their family partners in care as possible (e.g., dinner together). Provide opportunities for persons with dementia and their families to celebrate the holidays together through shared family activities and programs.

TIPS

You can share with family & friends

- A change in environment may be too stressful for a person with Alzheimer's disease. It is important to consider where the safest place for the person with AD is to celebrate the holidays, and this may not be at home. For many people with AD being taken away from familiar surroundings is overwhelming. Visits from family members that the person cannot remember or does not see very often can be distressing; a change of environment, combined with excess noise and activity can increase confusion and cause anxiety or anger. It is recommended that family consider a 'trial run' -bringing the person home for a short visit before the holidays to see how it goes. Having the person home for the holidays may not be in the best interest of the person with AD.
- Arrange for smaller numbers of family and friends to visit on different days
- Purchase gifts that stimulate the senses and make the person feel good
- Bring a favorite food to the person with dementia. Talk about the holiday memories this food brings to mind.

Behavioural Interventions

Perceived Control: It is important to recognize the many losses that a person might experience when entering a LTC Home, i.e. loss of privacy, etc. One might feel a loss of control of life situations.

- when we feel a lack of control of our situations we feel particularly stressed
- the base of most of the difficulties is lack of control
- perception is reality, it's how we feel that is important
- it is important to feel, or have the resident think or perceive they have more control

Allow the resident to make decisions, e.g. Ask if they would prefer their bath now or later, or choose where they would like to sit at meal time. Individuals may exhibit less inappropriate behaviour if they were more in control of their situations. The idea is to have the person feel more in control, without a lot of expense on the part of the staff.

Adapted from "Putting the P.I.E.C.E.S. Together" Workbook, 2005

EVENTS & EDUCATION

Alzheimer Society of Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma District Education Conference

The Alzheimer Society of Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma District will be hosting the 6th annual Alzheimer Education Conference on March 8, 2007. Key note speaker will be Dr. Sandra Black, Professor of Neurology at the University of Toronto and Neuroscience Program Research Director at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. Dr. Black's presentation will focus on detecting and differentiating the common dementias. Other presentations include: Dr. Scott Taylor—Search and Rescue Practices for People with Dementia
Dr. Paul Eshleman— The Link Between Alzheimer's Disease and Down's Syndrome
Algoma CCAC and Community Partners—Assisting Clients with Long-term Care Placement

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

Members of the Dementia Education Network recognize and support the need to offer ongoing continuing education for Personal Support Workers and other front line health care providers

Sault College proposes to offer a quality education workshop geared specifically to those persons who provide front line care.

Our first workshop is scheduled for May 2007.

We will offer 6 seminar sessions during a one-day workshop. You will be able to register for one, two or three seminars.

Help us identify the learning opportunities that are relevant to you and the people to whom you provide care. If you would like to contribute to the development of our topic list please complete the attached survey.

To access an electronic copy of the survey, go to the Algoma Dementia Network website at:

www.dementiaalgoma.org

RESOURCES

www.piecescanada.com P.I.E.C.E.S

www.u-first.ca U-First

www.alzheimer.ca Alzheimer Canada

www.marep.uwaterloo.ca MAREP

Evaluation and Feedback

To ensure that this newsletter is an effective source of information for you, your feedback is important to us. Please visit our website www.dementiaalgoma.org and fill out the evaluation.