

DANCE AS A THERAPY IN DEMENTIA CARE

There have been many debates over time regarding the use of psychosocial interventions in the management of agitation in dementia care. In this small study “Wu Tao”, a type of dance was selected to determine how it may be used to reduce these often very challenging behaviours. Dance therapy combines gentle movement, music and meditation which have been designed to harmonize the flow of energy. It is a potential treatment alternative that can be incorporated into the lives of people living with dementia.



Table: resident’s responses to questionnaires
(results from four week period)

Question	Yes	No	Further comments
Did you enjoy the dance session	100%	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyed movement • Relaxed me • ‘Gave me a big lift’ • ‘Very pleasant’
Do you feel the dance group has improved your mood, i.e. made you happier?	83.3%	16.7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wanted to join in • Felt on top of the world • Brighter • Made me feel happy • It didn’t make any difference to me
Would you like to attend a group like this each week?	83.3%	16.7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once per fortnight • Would love to • I think it will be very beneficial • It will keep me out of mischief

Conclusion

It is important to anticipate negative reactions and limitations to such alternative therapies when commencing sessions. Dance therapy may provide a non-pharmacological way to aid treatment and prevention of agitation in dementia.

Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects
Non Pharmacological	Resident compliance
Easily integrated in to daily routine	Resourcing instructors
Lowers Agitation	Understanding Dance therapy
Reduces Carer stress	Time constraint for staff
Encourages carer/ resident interaction	Non Consent
Physical activity/ no limitations apply	May only be appropriate for low care facilities
Low cost	Staff reluctance and motivation

Aim

This presentation addresses the practical issues of introducing this type of therapy, and attempts to support the use of psychosocial interventions in dementia care.

Method

Dance therapy was trialed, with a trained instructor, in a low care aged facility over a 6 week period. Residents who participated were identified as having symptoms of agitation as per the Cohen Mansfield Agitation Inventory (CMAI). Pre session scores were taken, thus giving us a clearer indication of their level of agitation. The average score was 66.83, (inclusion criteria >39), and qualitative screens were taken pre and post each session.

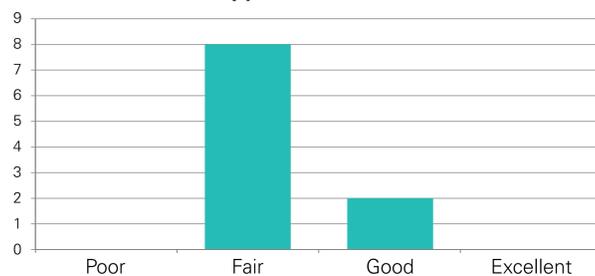
Semi Structured Interviews – (20 Care staff)

The semi structured interview aimed to provide a more detailed understanding of the experience of Dance therapy. The interview assessed, mood of staff, benefits as a care giver and relationships within the facility. Information revealed how individual participants have changed within their environment.

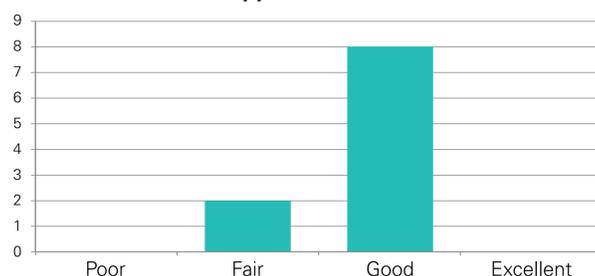
Findings

Dance therapy was noted to lift the spirits of residents and staff with an increase in communication and social laughter present during and after each session.

Mood: Pre Dance Therapy

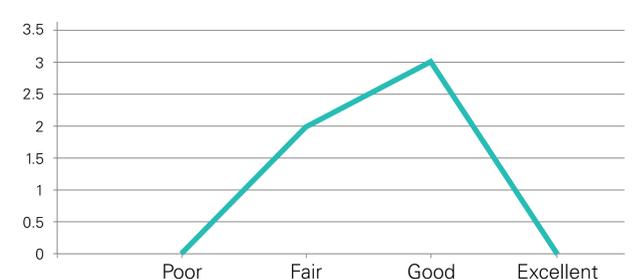


Mood: Post Dance Therapy



In conclusion Dance therapy is an experience for all, and it is possible that “Wu Tao” can reduce agitation and bring life and fun to any residential facility. A positive approach from staff enables the promotion of a relaxed social environment for all involved thus allowing the group to form a therapeutic bond.

Life as a whole



For further information, please contact:

Debbie Duignan Email: Debbie.Duignan@alzheimers.org.au
RMN, Ba (Hons) Senior Behaviour Consultant DBMAS WA)

**Dementia Behaviour Management
Advisory Services**

1800 699 799

A service supporting carers of people with dementia

Alzheimer’s Australia WA Ltd ABN 82 102 951 986

Head Office

9 Bedbrook Place
Shenton Park WA 6008
Telephone: (08) 9388 2800
Facsimile: (08) 9388 2739
PO Box 1509, Subiaco WA 6904
Email: alzwa@alzheimers.org.au
www.fightdementia.org.au

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Brodsky, H. (2003). Nursing home staff attitudes towards residents with dementia: strain and satisfaction with work. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 44 (6), 583-590.
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