

Exploring The Impact Of Psychological Interventions On Cognitive And Emotional Well-Being Of Alzheimer's Home Residents

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Abstract

This research paper will explore the influence of psychological interventions on the cognitive ability and emotional well-being of Alzheimer's patients. Data was gathered on the effectiveness of various therapeutic approaches through research and an extensive study done at Village Green, an Alzheimer's care facility. The results highlight the significant positive impact of these interventions in improving cognitive functioning and emotional well-being across most residents. Moreover, the results emphasize on the importance of implementing these therapeutic strategies in environments outside the care facilities to improve the quality of life for patients with this disease.

Date of submission: 20-08-2024

Date of acceptance: 30-08-2024

I. Introduction

Alzheimer's disease is a neurodegenerative ailment that affects the brain and impairs cognitive function as well as memory. It is gradual and irreversible, more common in those 65 or older. The loss of cognitive abilities, such as remembering, thinking, and reasoning, to the point that it interferes with a person's everyday life and activities is the most typical cause of dementia. As the population affected by this disease continues to increase, it is essential to explore methods to stall or prevent this cognitive decline.

This study intends to shed light on the critical elements that affect the wellbeing of people living with Alzheimer's in residential settings by evaluating the psychological aspects of care and how they can aid in reducing the impacts on patients.

This research intends to contribute to the knowledge of the psychological care in Alzheimer homes and ultimately, help caretakers, guardians, and healthcare professionals by combining the field of psychology with dementia. Moreover, this study will give people a more holistic approach when taking care of patients and aiding in therapeutic techniques through the process of cognitive loss.

II. Objectives

1. The extent to which cognitive and psychological activities can help in memory care.
2. A deeper understanding of the interplay between Alzheimer's care and psychology

Village Green is a memory care community committed to helping families, caretakers and patients with Alzheimer's in both Greater Houston, Texas and Dallas Metroplex, Texas. Their main goal is to provide a compassionate environment for the patients with a different approach catered to the residents. With 10 care units already set up, Village Green offers a thorough framework for this study, providing important insights into the effectiveness of therapies and psychological support systems. Having interned with Village Green since June 2021 and continuing, I have been exposed to a thorough framework for this study, providing important insights into the effectiveness of therapies and psychological support systems.

III. Methodology

A mixed-method approach was used, with quantitative and qualitative data collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on staff members to record the different psychological approaches used. Moreover, to assess emotional well-being, with the use of opportunity sampling, 20 patients were selected from ages 75-85 and given a self-report questionnaire. Additionally, there was data collected on progress made by patients by a naturalistic, unstructured observation done and compared with their past cognitive abilities. Both, the qualitative and quantitative data was analyzed to identify patterns and correlations.

IV. Results

Types of therapies used:

1. Cognitive behavioral therapy- It is a type of talking therapy to help manage problems by changing the way a person thinks and behaves. This type of therapy was mainly used on people in the earlier or middle stages of dementia.
2. Music therapy- The caregivers do activities where songs favoured by the patients when they were younger are played. For example, a famous singer 'Elvis Presley' was played often. Moreover, spiritual music is played, or drum circles are conducted occasionally.
3. Pet therapy- This is a guided interaction between the patients and a trained animal.
4. Aromatherapy- this form of therapy uses aromatic materials such as essential oils and gentle massages.
5. Geriatric care- This is a type of psychotherapy specifically for elderly patients where geriatric doctors conduct evaluations and prescribe the necessary medications to the patients.

Cognitive behavioral therapy affects the prefrontal cortex and precuneus, controlling the neural circuitry of emotional regulation. These parts of the brain are targeted by the Alzheimer's disease, causing changes in personality, impulsivity, memory deficits, poor decision-making, and difficulties with organization. The caregivers interviewed agreed that patients in early stages of dementia who took part in CBT for 3 weeks, significantly improved in decision-making and recalling abilities.

Since Alzheimer's affects the auditory and frontotemporal cortex, it can lead to difficulties in perceiving auditory cues and changes in behavior. Music therapy aids in regaining memory and may improve auditory-related impairments. When analyzing the questionnaire given to the patients, it was revealed that patients who listened to songs connected to memories from their past could 'visually imagine' them better after the song played in comparison to before. Additionally, it improved the emotional well-being of these patients since listening to music releases dopamine into the body.

Moreover, pet therapy releases the hormones oxytocin and serotonin into the body, improving the well-being and emotional state of the patients. The caregivers also reinforced this since they noted that when patients start feeling depressed or anxious, pet therapy is conducted to alleviate their mood.

Although aroma therapy cannot be used alone, if used as a complementary therapy, it might offer neuroprotective effects by reducing inflammation and oxidative damage in the brain which usually catalyzes the progression of Alzheimer's.

Lastly, geriatric care is essential, especially for patients in later stages of Alzheimer's who may be unable to engage in therapy sessions. Field observations showed that patient's mood and well-being was uplifted after taking prescribed medication.

According to a professional nurse at Village Green, "The leading cause of boredom and loneliness is lack of stimulation. This goes into a spiral leading to depression, wandering and getting injured which only makes their disease more severe. Keeping the patients entertained can eliminate those feelings and in turn, slow down the process of death."

V. Discussion

The outcomes of this research underline the essential role psychological interventions play in improving cognitive and emotional well-being among Alzheimer's patients. The positive effects observed and analyzed during the study suggest that therapies, especially cognitive behavioral therapy, and music therapy are powerful tools to slow down the progression of Alzheimer's. However, this study had limitations in terms of sample size and duration of the study, emphasizing on further long-term research.

Furthermore, there may be extraneous variables such as age, other health conditions, environment and other medications prescribed which could have affected the findings. In order to have a higher reliability, the test-retest should be implemented.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study shows the positive correlation between therapies and cognitive and well as emotional well-being. The improvements observed and studied prove that these methods of therapies should be used in other care facilities as well as by caregivers taking care of people with Alzheimer's from home. The findings also emphasize that there is a need for exploration of different therapies that aid in the decline of progression of Alzheimer's. With an increasing percent of the population getting Alzheimer's and at an earlier age, these findings should be implemented to improve the quality of life all over the world.