



## What Dementia Care Is Supported Through Research?

By Pam McDonald

Most caregivers in senior living communities serving residents with dementia are convinced their programs and practices benefit these seniors. But evidence, other than anecdotal, is hard to come by; there is little research on the effectiveness of dementia care practices. But [LifeShare Technologies](#), a Senior Housing Forum partner, has sought out and compiled studies that validates and supports the effectiveness of some of its primary programming.

### Using LifeShare Technologies for Dementia Care

LifeShare adds communications capabilities, activity programming, internet connectivity, and digital infrastructure to ordinary TVs. It consists of a compact set top box loaded with sophisticated software that allows users to click a remote control to easily share emails, photos, and videos with family and friends, as well as enjoy engagement programming such as music, games, news, and faith-based presentations.

LifeShare also offers a simplified memory care version that can be used as a therapeutic tool by staff to promote greater resident engagement and provide cognitive support. It also increases opportunities for families to interact with their loved ones -- in person or virtually.

### The Research

The following quotes fall into four research categories known to have an impact on dementia care and are a central part of LifeShare Technology's resident activity programming.

- **Memories/Reminiscence/Pictures**
  - *In populations with Alzheimer's disease, and other mild cognitive impairments, the picture superiority effect remains apparent.* [Note: The picture superiority effect is that we remember pictures better than words.] – "Preserved frontal memorial processing for pictures in patients with mild cognitive impairment," Neuropsychologia, 2009
  - *Reminiscence intervention is effective for increasing self-esteem and decreasing behavioural disturbances in individuals with dementia . . . Eighty percent of the subjects (12 out of 15) showed more attention to their personalised reminiscence photo video than to the other two types of TV shows, thus suggesting the effectiveness of personalized reminiscence photo videos for reminiscence intervention.* – "Effectiveness of personalised reminiscence photo videos for individuals with dementia", Neuropsychological Rehabilitation, August 2009

- *Reminiscence enabled staff to see and know the person beneath the dementia. It acted as . . . a key revealing the person to staff, enabling them to engage with the person with dementia in a different way. Knowing the person enabled staff to understand (through the lens of the person's past) and sometimes to accommodate the person's current behaviour.*
  - 'Seeing me through my memories': a grounded theory study on using reminiscence with people with dementia living in long-term care, Journal of Clinical Nursing, December 2014
- *. . . Music is unique in its powerful ability to elicit both memories and emotions. This can provide an important link to individual's past and a means of nonverbal communication with carers, which make it an ideal stimulus for persons with dementia."*
  - "Music and dementia," Progress in Brain Research, January 2015
- **Cognitive Exercises/Games**
  - *There was consistent evidence from multiple trials that cognitive stimulation programmes benefit cognition in people with mild to moderate dementia over and above any medication effects.*
    - Dementia Services Development Centre Wales, Bangor University, Bangor, UK – February 2012
- **Faith Programming**
  - *Spirituality and religion appear to slow cognitive decline, and help people use coping strategies to deal with their disease and have a better quality of life.*
    - "Spirituality and religion in older adults with dementia: a systematic review," International Psychogeriatrics epub, August 2014.
  - *In a survey of 2000 physicians, 56% believed that religion and spirituality have much or very much influence on health . . . Respondents suggested that religion and spirituality help patients cope, give them a positive state of mind, or provide emotional and practical support via the religious community. Research indicates that roughly 80% of medical schools now offer spiritual care courses or integrate spirituality into their curricula.*
    - "Should Doctors Be Involved in a Patient's Spiritual Care", By Shelly Reese, Medlink/Web MD, 2011
- **Therapeutic Music**
  - *Music-based activities can represent a valid and without side effects intervention for reducing psychological and behavioral disturbances related to neurological disorders and also for promoting the functional recovery. Specifically, the most significant results of the music interventions on the psychological side can be identified in the aspects more closely related to mood, especially in the reduction of the depressive and anxiety's component, and in the improvement of the emotional expression, communication and interpersonal skills, self esteem and quality of life.*
    - "Effects of music and music therapy on mood in neurological patients", a review of 25 research programs, World Journal of Psychiatry, March 22, 2015
  - *Music as therapy is not just for your loved one. We know that caregivers encounter increased stress over caring for a loved one . . . Studies show that listening to music can lead to increased secretion levels of melatonin, a hormone associated with mood regulation, lower aggression, reduced depression and enhanced sleep Using music to cope with these common caregiver complaints can be a welcome relief to caregiver burn-out. Some benefits for staff include expanded resources for activity content, opportunities for reminiscing, alternative tool for treatment.*
    - "Caregivers Take Note – Music as Therapy", alz.org | blog, 2012



This article has been brought to you by [LifeShare Technologies](#) in partnership with [Senior Housing Forum](#).