



Reducing Agitation in Dementia Patients

Samrah S. Khan

School of Theoretical Applied Science, Ramapo College of New Jersey



Introduction

- Approximately 60-70% of the adult population, 85 + has dementia (ASHA,2020).
- Majority of dementia patients reside in nursing homes (ASHA, 2020).
- Approximately 50% of dementia patients experience agitation.
- Agitation can manifest neuropsychiatric behaviors. Patients can:
 - become suicidal and homicidal
 - become verbally and physically abusive
 - confused and sudden change in personality
- These behaviors are very dangerous and they can cause harm to healthcare staff.
- Agitation increases morbidity and mortality rate.

Background

- Confusion, depression, and stress
- Pain
- Disturbed Sleep Cycle
- Constipation
- Unfamiliar Setting
- Bright lights or color



Alternative Therapies to Reduce Agitation

Environmental Factors:

- **Light therapy** can be used to help patients sleep better
 - Blue light therapy during the winters can help with maintaining a normal sleep schedule
- **Consistent Temperature** can help the patient



stay calm without getting irritated from extreme temperature changes.

- WHO recommends 20 °C for the elder population.
- **Use a neutral color palette** when selecting wall colors or clothes.
 - Bright colors can be a bit harsh on the eyes.

Wander garden

- Provides security and allow patients to connect with nature.
- This can also be used in conjunction with image guided therapy to provide a calming effect.



Spatial Configuration:

- Adjusting a room to a patient's preference while maintaining a safety can reduce confusion.
- It can provide more familiar feeling.



Aromatherapy:

- Provides calming effect
- Use in conjunction with massage to relax the patient.

Music Therapy

- Patients can find music of their choice to be relaxing and encourage patients to interact with other people.



Doll Therapy:

- Patients with dementia look for a parent figure, which can cause them anxiety and frustration.
- Doll therapy helps patients feel relief which may decrease the use of antipsychotics.



Robotic Pet Therapy

- Decreased perception of pain and the use of antipsychotics.
- Caregivers do not have to take on the responsibilities of pet along with the patient



Daily Routine:

- Having a structured daily routine can decrease confusion in dementia patients.
- Following through tasks in a certain order can relieve agitation.

References:

- Allen, K. (2020). Alzheimer's Disease: The magic of pets. *BrightFocus Foundation*. <https://www.brightfocus.org/alzheimers/article/alzheimers-disease-magic-pets>
- Craig J (2014) Music therapy to reduce agitation in dementia. *Nursing Times*; 110: 32/33, 12-15.
- Dementia. (2020). *American Speech- Language- Hearing- Association*. https://www.asha.org/PRPSpecificTopic.aspx?folderid=8589935289§ion=Incidence_and_Prevalence
- Kaymaz T.,Ozdemir, L. (2016). Effects of aromatherapy on agitation and related caregiver burden in patients with moderate to severe dementia: A pilot study. *Geriatric Nursing*. Volume 38, Issue 3,Pages 231-237. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gerinurse.2016.11.001>
- Ng, Q., Yih, C., Ho., X Shawn, S.,et. A;. (2017). Doll therapy for dementia sufferers: A systematic review. *Complementary Theories in Clinical Practice*, 26: 42-46. doi: 10.1016/j.ctcp.2016.11.007
- Petersen, S., Houston, S., Qin, H., Tague, C., & Studley, J. (2016). The utilization of robotic Pets in Dementia Care. *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*.55(2), 569-574. doi:10.3233/jad-16070.