

Beyond bingo: tailoring lifestyle activities

Liz Miles and **Heather Campbell** discuss a successful national workshop program offering Diversional Therapists hands-on learning in music and art therapy, aromatherapy and life story work for people with dementia

While bingo may well have a place as an enjoyable activity in the life of many people, including those with dementia, for some it also has an unfortunate association with the banal. Beyond bingo lies an array of activities, pastimes and interests to discover, uncover and introduce. By discovering what it is that someone with dementia has always enjoyed, what they've always done with their time and what they like or can enjoy doing now, individualised attention and activities can be integrated into their everyday life.

The interplay between activity, inactivity and subsequent behaviour patterns, capacity and quality of life of people at various stages of dementia is well established and it is here that the work of Diversional Therapists comes into play.

An experiential approach

A professional development workshop for Diversional Therapists that explores how approaches to leisure and lifestyle can enhance the day-to-day and moment-to-moment life of a person with dementia has been developed collaboratively by the Queensland Dementia Training Study Centre (QLD DTSC) and Dementia Behaviour Management Advisory Service (DBMAS QLD).

The workshop came about through the recognition that while many workshops describe activities to use when working with people with dementia, few take an experiential approach, with a focus on the how as well as the why. This highly interactive workshop, *Beyond bingo: tailoring lifestyle activities to*

promote quality of life for people with dementia, has now been successfully conducted for two years, with plans for further workshops under way. (Regular workshop presenters include: Kate Hawkins, DBMAS National Coordinator; Tracey Dutton, an aromatherapist with expertise in dementia education; and Hamish King, a registered music therapist at Motives in Music.)

Lifestyle-enriching activities

The Beyond Bingo workshop aims to increase understanding about the evidence-based links between dementia-related behaviours, quality of life and specific lifestyle-enriching activities for people with dementia, and to enhance skills in using particular lifestyle-enriching activities to promote quality of life for people with

dementia. The core activities of the day are the concurrent two-hour workshop sessions that focus on life story work, art therapy, music therapy and aromatherapy, of which participants select two. Each is highly interactive and aims to provide evidence-informed learning and skills development that participants can take away and easily and inexpensively implement in their workplace.

The workshop activities

Life story work

The life story work session demonstrates the ease of creating a life history in a way that opens up a range of communication modes between people with dementia and their carers and loved ones. Participants are guided through the process from a starting point of beginning to



Diversional Therapists taking part in the aromatherapy learning session at a Beyond Bingo workshop in June this year

gather just a little information, to growing it to build a real connection between two people. The session uses life history templates and guidelines that are freely available online.

Music therapy

Participants in the music therapy session use their voices and percussion to learn how music can be used as an effective tool to enhance clients' socialisation and mood

Identifying dementia-specific educational needs

In 2012, the Queensland Dementia Training Study Centre (QLD DTSC) conducted a national online survey of Diversional Therapists (DT) to identify their key dementia education and training needs. The survey was promoted nationally through DTSC networks. It was broadly targeted to include all the DT workforce, to learn more about what it comprises; including roles, qualifications, professional membership and education.

In summary, the survey identified:

- The highest level of education for more than half of the DTs was a TAFE certificate or diploma.
- Those with the highest education qualifications were more likely to work in NSW.
- An expressed need for education about the dementia-specific requirements of people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds and those with younger onset dementia.
- A need for education about a range of topics including: dementia basics; differentiating between dementia, delirium and depression; behaviour management/interventions; and activity-specific education.
- A preference for face-to-face training methods.
- The need for a range of training methods including self-directed learning.
- Financial and geographical access is an issue.
- Further dementia-specific education and training was seen as valuable to assist in participants' current work role.

The survey results confirmed the need for training in the area of tailoring lifestyle activities to improve quality of life for people with dementia and helped shape the Beyond Bingo workshop program.

A more detailed summary of the survey results is available at: www.dtsc.com.au/resources/allied-health-resources

and also lower levels of agitation and stress. The presenter includes video examples of his work with people with severe dementia to demonstrate the profound effect music can elicit.

Aromatherapy

The aromatherapy session explores the key issues in selecting and using essential oils to promote relaxation, alertness and reminiscence in people living with dementia. Participants are given the opportunity to experiment with their own responses to essential oils, make individual blends and learn how to safely incorporate aromatherapy into everyday routines.

Art therapy

Art therapy sessions focus on art appreciation as well as creating art in various forms of expression for people living with dementia, catering to a range of interests, abilities and experience in art. A recent

participant said she'd learned that: "You don't have to be an artist to be creative".

Interaction and evaluation

The interactive parts of the day are underpinned by the first session which provides an overview of dementia and explores the role of activity to enhance quality of life. The session explores the context for activities for people with dementia; how activity can be a preventive and treatment for Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD); inactivity and engagement; meaningful activities; and prescribing and tailoring to the individual.

Evaluation, including feedback on content and knowledge transfer, has been very positive and highlights the need for such practical workshops to continue. Participants' comments on what they gained spoke to the major themes: for example, the

"power of appropriate activities if applied individually or with individuals in mind", and "various tools of communication with people affected by dementia". Others quoted individual insights: "Listen more and talk less" and "life history being the foundation of what we do".

Hands-on education

The Beyond Bingo workshops appear to provide an effective formula for 'hands-on' education for those providing diversional therapy to people with dementia in a range of settings. It is proposed that a series of Beyond Bingo workshops be conducted nationally based on this model, using local speakers and workshop presenters. The interactive session topics may be adapted based on the local availability of facilitators with appropriate experience and expertise.

The next Beyond Bingo

workshop is scheduled for 6 November in Rockhampton, Queensland. Look for registration details for this and future workshops in the events section on the national DTSC website at www.dtsc.com.au. ■



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This issue of AJDC includes several other articles highlighting the work of Occupational Therapists and Diversional Therapists in promoting the well-being of people with dementia. See pages 13, 37 and 40.

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