

The Bus Stop to Nowhere

Purpose

Residents with dementia often demonstrate wandering behaviors. Many times these residents are seeking something or someone from their past, something familiar. Research indicates residents with dementia retain relatively intact long-term memories but exhibit greater difficulty with short-term memory. Unfortunately, these long-term memories do not benefit residents of a skilled nursing facility, who instead must rely on short-term memories for orientation. This helps us understand the wandering behaviors. Most of the time, the residents are confused and looking for something they understand, something from their past (long-term memory), something that makes their environment feel a little less scary. The phantom bus stop was designed to target these residents' long-term memory, decrease wandering behaviors, and assist in calming down the residents as they may be more familiar with their environment.

Goal

The goal of the phantom bus stop is to decrease wandering and decrease the amount of time required by staff to re-direct the residents.

Create

It is important to create a bus stop that best represents those of an era that the residents are familiar with. The bus stop we created was designed with a 1930's look in an effort to target the residents' long-term memory of a familiar past. It is suggested the bus stop be located by common exit doors. When choosing a location be sure you are in compliance with all state regulations.

Supplies and Materials:

1. Bench
2. Vintage street signs and maps that would represent a bus stop and current city
3. Lamp posts (ex. wall decals)
4. Newspaper to leave on bench for reading

Research

According to nursing staff interviews and questionnaires at Legend Oaks New Braunfels, approx. 82% of long-term care residents demonstrate wandering behaviors and staff spends an average of 50 minutes a day guiding these residents back to their appropriate locations. A resident with wandering behaviors will often ask repetitive questions, causing the staff to stop what they are doing, and re-direct the resident back to an appropriate location.

According to Passini's (1980) research indicated when dementia residents are provided with landmarks that are representative of the resident's long-term memory; they will be able to recognize the landmark.

Betty, Salmon, Butters, Heindel, and Granholm, (1988) research indicates that dementia residents are likely to have greater access to older memories compared to more recent ones. Further research into reminiscent therapy further illustrates the benefits of providing a landmark the patient can connect with. Benefits include: developing more positive feelings while reducing stress and agitation, increasing recall of memories from childhood and young adulthood, increasing confidence in their abilities, providing an opportunity to talk about what holds meaning for them, and providing relief from boredom and symptoms of depression.

Conclusion

A phantom bus stop can be utilized to decrease wandering in residents, decrease the amount of time staff is spending to re-direct the resident to appropriate locations, and increase the quality of life for the resident.

Procedure

In-service/train staff on the purpose and benefits of the bus stop. The topics to discuss:

1. Long-term memory vs. short-term memory
2. Wandering behaviors and how they relate to short-term and long-term memories
3. The location of the bus stop
4. How to direct the resident to the bus stop. Example: "Mr. Jones, I see you are looking for your mother, would you like to wait for her at the bus stop"?
5. Most research indicates residents will often forget why they are sitting at the bus stop and can be easily re-directed to other activities.

