

Just 10 minutes of social interaction a day improves wellbeing in dementia care

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An e-learning programme that trains care home staff to engage in meaningful social interaction with people who have dementia improves wellbeing and has sustained benefits.

The average person with dementia in a care home experiences just two minutes of [social interaction](#) each day. They also showed that out of 170 available training programmes for nursing home [staff](#), only three are evidence-based—none of which improve quality of life.

The Wellbeing and Health for people with Dementia (WHELD) programme trained care home staff to increase social interaction from two minutes a day to ten, combined with a programme of personalised care. It involves simple measures such as talking to residents about their interests and involving them in decisions around their care.

The Improving Staff Attitudes and Care for People with Dementia e-Learning (tEACH) study, conducted by the University of Exeter Medical School and King's College London in partnership with the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), was presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference 2018. The study involved 280 residents and care staff in 24 care homes over nine months.

Carers took part in an e-learning programme with key modules based on the WHELD training, with or without Skype supervision. They compared outcomes to usual care. Both treatment arms improved resident wellbeing and staff attitudes to person-centred care. The Skype supported arm continued to deliver improved resident wellbeing four months after the trial was completed.

Joanne McDermid, of King's College London, who presented the research, said: "Care home staff are under a lot of pressure—it's a really tough job. It's a challenging environment for both residents living with dementia and staff. Our programme moved care staff to see dementia through the eyes of those who are living it. We found a simple approach, delivered as e-learning, improves staff attitudes to care and residents' wellbeing, ultimately improving lives for people with dementia.

"In a traditionally task -focussed work environment, our programme reminds us of the human side; of the full life experience of those living with dementia in care."

Professor Clive Ballard, of the University of Exeter Medical School, who led the research, said: "Just take a moment to imagine life with just two minutes of social interaction each day. To accept this is discrimination against people with [dementia](#). We urgently need to do better. Most care home training programmes are not evidence-based. We know our programme works over the long term, and we now know it can be delivered remotely. We now need to roll this out to care homes."

Watch care home staff talk about their experience of WHELD training:

Provided by University of Exeter

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