



## PAC Research Corner:

*Projects with the University of Southern Indiana and  
PAC*

*by Beth Nolan, PhD*

[www.TeepaSnow.com](http://www.TeepaSnow.com)

A common question we receive here at Positive Approach® to Care (PAC) is, “what is the evidence-base for Teepa’s Positive Approach?” In this reoccurring journal entry, we’ll explore not only the current state of the research Teepa used to build Positive Approach to Care, but also the current state of the various, on-going research projects happening throughout PAC.

The most recent research project came out of a relationship Teepa has with Dr. Katie Elhman, associate professor of gerontology and director of the University of Southern Indiana’s Center for Healthy Aging and Wellness. Dr. Elhman became a PAC Certified Independent Trainer at one of our first set of PAC Trainer Certification courses in July 2014. Teepa met Dr. Elhman at the [Mid-America Institute on Aging and Wellness \(MAIA\) annual conference](#) – a two-day, gerontology conference for lay persons, nurses, social workers, older adults, and professionals working in the field of gerontology filled with practical tools and ground-breaking information related to successful aging and gerontology. The conversations Dr. Elhman and I had during our mentor calls led to the USI-PAC collaboration to study a change model on how care is provided for people living with dementia in southern, rural Indiana.

The first project was to examine the effect of our Certification Course on twelve skilled nursing facility (SNF) teams in southern, rural Indiana. The study was funded by a grant from the Indiana State Department of Health. The 24 participants took on the role of a Trainer or a Coach. The SNF teams built their own PAC dementia care awareness, knowledge, and skills. They then learned how to train or coach these PAC skills in their staff. PAC Trainers provided new awareness, knowledge, and introduced skills to their SNF staff through workshops, and then the PAC Coaches followed up to help staff practice what they learned and bring their knowledge to skill. In the first twelve months after the Certification course, these certified staff reached more than 500 providers, care givers, administrators, and families.

To measure the results of the program, the USI team conducted pre- and post-measures. Dr. Elhman and her team collected surveys from the Trainers and Coaches to measure their knowledge and perception of dementia. Statistically significant differences were found in knowledge growth in: 1) how staff approach a person living with dementia in relationship to spatial awareness and vision changes, 2) understanding neurological changes in dementia in areas related to working memory, hippocampus, and temporal lobe function, and 3) perceptions about dementia. Currently, the USI team is analyzing pre- and post-training videos to examine how staff approach (using the Positive Physical Approach™) people living with dementia. The results are under review for publication in a peer-reviewed, scientific journal. Most importantly, though, our SNF Trainer-Coach teams reported what we all have seen again and again, that this specialized dementia care training forever changed the way they approached, connected, and provided care *with* a person living with dementia!