

November 10, 2025 Weekly Clinical Update

With the explosion of memory care units, along with the dramatic increase in the diagnosis of dementia-related diagnoses across the spectrum of senior care, perhaps this is a good time to discuss programming for dementia care...not associated with drugs. There are a number of evidence-based programs available for programming both to prevent but also plan for dementia care settings. These programs align well to enhance resident well-being during program planning. The facility's Life Enrichment Director (AD), may find these resources valuable in care planning for non-pharmacological interventions related to dementia and/or behaviors.

- Super Noggin (supernoggin.org)
 - Key features include:
 - Programming and activities that focus on brain-boosting exercises
 - ❖ Memory games
 - ❖ Puzzles
 - ❖ Cognitive challenges tailored for seniors
 - Technology integration
 - ❖ Use of apps or digital tools for in-facility practice, tracking progress and adaptive learning
- BrainHQ (brainhq.com) (free trial available)
 - This program is a “science-backed digital platform with adaptive exercises targeting:
 - Memory
 - Attention
 - Speed
 - Brain health
 - Features 29 exercises focusing in brain speed, people skills
- Lumosity (lumosity.com) (subscription-based at ~\$12/month)
 - App-based with daily brain games to train memory, problem-solving, flexibility
 - 50+ games; 15-minute sessions; performance insights; senior-friendly modes
- Elevate (elevateapp.com) (~\$5/month)
 - Improves focus and processing speed in older adults
 - Mobile app focusing on daily workouts for reading, writing, math & speaking skills to boost cognitive sharpness
- Peak (peak.net) (free for basic version & pro version ~\$5/month)

- Enhances cognitive function with evidence of delaying decline in early dementia stages
- Neuroscience-inspired games for memory, language, and mental agility
- 40+ games; team challenges; brain map tracking
- Brain Exercise Initiative (brainexerciseinitiative.com) (free or low-cost)
 - Simple, low-tech exercises of math, writing & reading aloud to improve cognition
 - Weekly sessions; no tech required; focuses on neuroplasticity
- Neurobic Exercises (available via Amazon(~\$10)) or libraries
 - Book-based or guided program of “neurobics” (routine-breaking activities) to stimulate brain connections and prevent/slow memory loss
 - “Everyday twists like eating with non-dominant hand or sensory walks”
 - 70 exercises in core book

Additional tips for Implementation:

- Start small: 10-15 minutes daily
- Combine with real-world activities like crosswords, card games, gardening, any activity that engage multiple senses & reduce isolation
- Many of these programs offer free trials or senior discounts

The Alzheimer’s Association (<https://www.alz.org/>) Dementia Care Practice

Recommendations also recommend that dementia programming should include the following principles:

- Be person-centered based on each individual resident’s life history, preferences, and abilities to foster a sense of purpose and reduce frustration
- Promote engagement without overwhelm using short, success-oriented sessions (10-30 minutes) with options for varying ability levels
- Incorporate evidence-based elements including cognitive stimulation, physical exercise, sensory input and social interaction
- Involve staff and family members including matching cognitive levels for engagement and family participation in meals or reminiscence
- Ensure safety and adaptability using visual cues, slip-resistant floors and tech like touchscreens for reminiscence galleries
- Schedule routinely with predictable routine including morning walks, afternoon music to reduce anxiety, with flexibility of “days off” for residents

Several structured programs provide guidance on implementation including:

- Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) which includes group-based sessions to boost thinking, memory and problem-solving
- Reminiscence Therapy using photos, music or stories from the residents' past
- Connections Activity Program which matches lifelong interests to current abilities
- GUIDE Model which is a program developed by CMS for comprehensive care coordination for dementia, including programming
- Honoring Choice (thecherrywoodmemorycare.com) which includes iPod playlists for music therapy, brain-stimulating tasks like simple crafts

All of this information focuses on the importance of the role of the Life Enrichment Coordinator (Activity Director) in providing each resident with his/her highest practicable psychosocial wellbeing, which is what CMS, each state, and ethics requires of each facility. There are so many resources available, but they take time to research and plan, then implement. But the residents are well-worth the efforts and the minimum money required to implement.