

Title of Proposed Project

Implementing Environmental Modifications to Enhance the Dining Experience for Individuals with Dementia in Skilled Nursing Facilities

Principal Contact Name

Dr. Gina Tucker-Roghi

Study Collaborators

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One Paragraph Abstract

The purpose of this project is to explore and examine existing research related to environmental modifications, both physical and social, that can enhance the dining experience in SNF settings. The project's question is: Will physical and social environmental modifications within the dining area of the SNF setting and implementation of a dining toolkit have a positive impact on the meaningful occupation of dining among individuals with dementia, as measured by increased nutritional intake and weight, reduced negative behaviors, and reduced caregiver burden due to increased engagement in dining activities from persons with dementia compared to unmodified dining areas? Our collaborative partner from Legend Oaks Healthcare Rehabilitation in New Braunfels, Texas will provide the program participants. These participants will include residents who are diagnosed with mild to severe dementia and partake in feeding activities within the main dining hall. The effectiveness of the project will be evaluated by the staff at Legend Oaks, which will include measurements of nutritional intake, weight, and behaviors of the residents prior to and following environmental modifications in the dining area and implementation of the dining toolkit. The success of the project will also be evaluated by surveying caregiver feelings and perceptions of their burden prior to and following its implementation.

Goals and Objectives

Through a needs assessment, we aim to create a series of informative online workshops, an environmental modification manual, and a dining toolkit user guide in order to better support and enhance the dining experience for residents. There are three objectives we hope to accomplish through the implementation of this project. First, persons with dementia will improve their nutritional intake and weight. Second, it is expected that negative behaviors associated with dementia will decrease. Lastly, due to increased engagement in dining activities from residents, feelings of caregiver burden will be reduced.

Multiple studies have indicated the environment one lives in can impact their performance in daily life occupations. Individuals diagnosed with dementia often require full time care and have changed their living environment to a SNF setting, which may be an environment that no longer supports or promotes meaningful occupational experiences, particularly in dining activities. The lack of support in dining experiences in SNF settings may impact the individual's behavior, food intake, and independence in self-feeding. The projected outcome of this project is that by enhancing the dining environment in conjunction with caregiver training, it will better support individuals diagnosed with dementia, both physically and socially.

Background and Significance

Literature has noted certain modifications that can be made to enhance nutritional intake, which ultimately enhances their overall well-being and QOL (Liu et al., 2019). Studies demonstrate that social interactions can be supported through arrangement in furniture, face-to-face interactions, and by providing strategies for caregivers during dining (Hung, Chaudhury, & Rust, 2016; Keller et al., 2010). Creating a familiar ritual or routine in the dining environment can provide the residents and caregivers with a sense of comfort, security, enjoyment, and belonging, which can increase participation and engagement in feeding occupations and reduce agitation that often occurs during the dining experience (Palese et al., 2018; Hung, Chaudhury, & Rust, 2016).

Based on literature, our project aims to focus on the bridge that may be created between the need for tailoring specific components of activities, which can be modified to best fit individuals with dementia in their meaningful dining experiences in order to enhance social interaction and overall meaning through sensory modifications of the dining room, preparatory tasks that are embedded in pre-dining rituals, and providing a home-like physical environment. This training may allow for caregivers to provide cues for promoting independence in occupations, which allows for greater

QOL following positive dining experiences. Our project contributes to the field of occupational therapy as it provides a holistic perspective regarding individuals with dementia, including a better understanding of the physical, psychological, and social needs that are required to promote participation in occupations that are essential to our livelihood, specifically the ADL of feeding and the dining experience.

Project/Program Design and Methods

The first action step that will be taken is to collect data from current research for successful environmental modifications implemented in SNF facilities. The collected findings will be used to develop an environmental modification manual (EMM) outlining the physical environmental changes that support an individual's engagement in meaningful dining, which will be completed in February 2020. As the EMM is developing, a needs assessment will be completed in February 2020 to track current rituals and routines that support the dining experience, the amount of food intake of the residents with mild to severe dementia, behaviors, level of independence for feeding, and caregiver satisfaction. One demo toolkit will be created and provided to the SNF to utilize with ten residents as a pilot. The toolkit will be completed in April 2020, containing items supported by research and items commonly used for routines and rituals that support dining and increases participation in feeding. The toolkit will include each item, user guide, training video, and EMM. Once the dining toolkit has been completed, a virtual presentation will be delivered to the director of rehabilitation. The virtual presentation will be completed on a date in April 2020 that is mutually agreed on with the director. Evaluations will be presented to the director to track the outcomes of implementing the dining toolkit. The pilot implementation will be completed between May 1st to July 31st 2020. The data for the outcomes will be collected in August 1, 2020. The outcomes will be evaluated for post-changes and application for general implementation into SNFs. The final presentation of the project will be delivered in October 2020.

Feasibility Analysis and Timeline

To complete this project in a timely and practical manner, in person meetings including every student collaborator will occur 1x/week for 4 hours. Apart from meetings, an average of 12 hours/week will be dedicated by each student in communicating with the project/program managers, searching the literature, completing readings, developing resources, etc. Project managers will commit an average of 5 hours/week in assisting the students to ensure needs are met, as well as progression and development of the project. Time for this project is allocated within the student's graduate program curriculum to occur at least 1x/week for the next 4 academic semesters. Institutional support will be provided by Dominican University of California and Dr. Gina Tucker-Roghi, a faculty advisor from the MSOT program.

Delineated timeline is as follows:

Development of Environmental Modification Manual - February 2020

Development of Dining Toolkit, User Guide, & Training Video - April 2020

Virtual Presentation - April 2020

Pilot Implementation of Dining Toolkit - May 1, 2020 - July 31, 2020

Data collection - August 1, 2020

Analysis of Outcomes - August 2020

Development of poster presentation - September 2020

Presentation of Project - October 2020

Budget Description and Justification

In order to create the materials required to achieve the objectives of our project, we will need \$250 to produce a physical copy of the environmental modification manual, a physical copy of the dining toolkit user guide, to create the contents of the dining toolkit for the facility to initially use and replicate for use, and for our poster presentation. Our poster is necessary to our project as we will be presenting at our school conferences, Occupational Therapy Association of California (OTAC), and American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). An environmental modification manual is important because it gives the agency information on appropriate lighting, temperature, noise levels, furniture layout, and colors to support the dining experience. A dining toolkit user guide is important because it will instruct the agency on how to use the dining toolkit properly. The manual, user guide, and poster will require \$75 for folders, paper, ink, and printing costs. The dining toolkit is essential in implementing changes in the social environment as it provides pre-dining rituals that support the dining experience before feeding. We hope that the outcomes of this toolkit will promote social interaction, enhance the dining experience, and ultimately increase participation in meaningful occupations. The contents of this toolkit will include sensory items that will enhance the five senses prior to dining. It will also include a basket, adaptive utensils, moist tolettes (disposable and reusable), prayer cards, and other possible items. The toolkit

will approximately amount to \$175. Our collaborative partner is currently applying for a grant that will be utilized for the suggested physical environmental changes in the main dining hall as well as replications of our dining toolkit.

Faculty Advisors

Dr. Gina Tucker-Roghi

Bio - Principal Contact

Dr. Tucker-Roghi joined the occupational therapy field in 1992, and is a specialist in the occupational needs of clients with neurocognitive impairments and their caregivers. Dr. Tucker-Roghi developed an abilities-based OT intervention program for clients with dementia and has presented nationally on her work. The program has been implemented at facilities around the country where she educates OT practitioners on the implementation of evidence-based OT practices with this unique population.

Collaborator Bios

Julia Lee, Nooshin Moslehi, Vickie Nguyen, Cierra Passey, Aileen Quach, and Esther Yu are Masters of Science in Occupational Therapy Students at Dominican University of California.

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