

**Title of Proposed Project**

Volunteer Training Program to Enhance Engagement in Meaningful Activities for Residents with Dementia in Skilled Nursing Facilities

**Principal Contact Name**

Victoria Ramia

**Study Collaborators**

Nhat Hoang, OT student at Dominican University of California

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Kelsy Wallace, OT student at Dominican University of California

Gina Tucker-Roghi, OTD, OTR/L

JB Chua, Summerfield Healthcare Center, Director of Rehabilitation

Casen Buh, Summerfield Healthcare Center, Administrator

**One Paragraph Abstract**

Dementia is an increasing public health concern impacting much of the worldwide population with behavioral changes and disturbances, need for around-the-clock-care in advanced stages, significant care costs, and an unpredictable course of progression. As the prevalence increases, many individuals with dementia (IwD) are admitted to skilled nursing facilities (SNF). After admittance, the rate of caregiver visits declines, increasing the risk of social isolation of IwD. The purpose of this Dementia Volunteer Training program is to decrease social isolation by providing opportunities for volunteers to engage in meaningful occupations with IwD, which would increase visit satisfaction and frequency. The project will be implemented at the Summerfield Healthcare Center, a skilled nursing facility. The team members will create training modules and volunteer resources to increase visitor confidence and comfortability in facilitating meaningful activities for IwD. The team will train the first group of volunteers. Then, the team will educate the activities director through the Train the Trainer model and provide the facility with replicable materials and resources to continue the program for future volunteers. Program effectiveness will be determined by changes in visitation quality and quantity through volunteer pre- and post- training survey results and visitation records. Improved volunteer perception of quality of visits, frequency, and duration will indicate success of the project.

**Goals and Objectives**

The purpose of this project is to decrease social isolation and increase QOL of IwD through improved quality and frequency of volunteer visits for engagement in meaningful activities. Existing programs focus on communication strategies or individualized activities at a SNF, but not both, and they lack education regarding dementia behaviors and symptoms, stages, and remaining abilities. The primary objective of this project is to provide volunteers with knowledge of stages of dementia and resources to effectively facilitate stage appropriate activities that would improve and increase their interactions with IwD. The education will include a training module that may include digital content, written resources, podcasts, videos, and live interactive training. In addition, the project will provide digital resources that include information for volunteers, after the program is implemented at the facility. After completing this training program, volunteers will gain foundational knowledge of dementia to reduce stigma and increase effective communication strategies for IwD. The goal is for visitors to feel knowledgeable in interacting with IwD at different levels and have the tools to facilitate meaningful activities for IwD. Ultimately, confidence in abilities to engage with IwD will increase visiting frequency and improve IwD's QOL.

**Background and Significance**

As the prevalence of dementia increases, as does the admittance to SNFs, which can lead to greater risk for social isolation for IwD. Progressive decline in cognitive functions create challenges for SNF residents residing with dementia to participate in meaningful activities and interactions with family members that are necessary for enhancing their overall health, wellbeing, and QOL. Engaging with volunteers can increase engagement in activities and improve socialization of IwD in SNF settings. Visiting patterns can be influenced by visitor perception and knowledge of dementia. Current research identifies common misconceptions about dementia, including the belief that it is a mental illness, or that is a part of normal aging. Additionally, stigma includes misconceptions that IwD are unable to engage,

or do not want to engage in activities. A training program can address stigma and challenges when engaging with IwD. Existing visitor programs, such as FVEP, music interventions, TAP, and individualized one-on-one activities have positive impacts on IwD in SNF. These programs provide training regarding communication techniques or facilitation individualized activities in isolation, but do not combine the information with education regarding remaining abilities in the various stages of dementia for a comprehensive visitor training program. Education regarding dementia stages, stage-specific behaviors, remaining abilities, and stage-appropriate communication strategies and activities may increase visitor's confidence in facilitating meaningful activities for IwD. An occupation-based volunteer program can allow visitors to feel successful in their visits with IwD, increasing their visiting frequency and resulting in positive impacts for the resident with dementia.

### **Project/Program Design and Methods**

This program is developed to increase QOL for residents with dementia at Summerfield Healthcare Center, a SNF, through a volunteer training program. Currently, IwD are at risk for social isolation and a decline in overall well-being. The proposed program will provide volunteer education to promote meaningful activities and interactions between volunteer and resident, resulting in increased confidence in the visitor, and potential for increased frequency of visits. The program will include a referral to the activities department from the occupational therapist who has assessed individual residents, specifying the residents' relevant Allen Level. The licensed occupational therapist will create a client profile card with information about the resident's preferred activities and the best approaches to interaction appropriate for their Allen Level. The project will focus on individuals in ACL 2 through 4. The referral will exclude individuals in ACL 1 due to severity of symptoms impacting the safety of the volunteer and the resident. The referral will also exclude individuals in stages 5 and 6, as they are often high functioning individuals who can initiate meaningful interactions and occupational participation autonomously. The team will educate the first group of volunteers regarding dementia, ACL stages, stage-appropriate communication, and stage-appropriate activities. A training module with multiple mediums will be used, including live, digital, and written resources. A sample activity box will be provided to the facility for replication and distribution for volunteers to use. Through a train-the-trainer model, the team will educate the activities director to implement the training module for future volunteers.

### **Feasibility Analysis and Timeline**

Project will start in September 2019 and continue until December 2020. OT students will start planning in September 2019, and communicate with the faculty advisor and the staff at Summerfield Healthcare Center until the end of July 2020. OT students will work on creating the necessary items for the project, which includes creating the activities box and online resource module, and implement the project at Summerfield Healthcare Center by March 2020. Students will collaborate with JB Chua, Director of Rehabilitation, to find volunteers for the facility. Students will train the activities director and conduct the first volunteers training at Summerfield Healthcare Center in March 2020. Future volunteers will be trained by the activities director. The project will continue to run until June 2020. A barrier that can occur during our project is finding the volunteers. As part of our project, we need to find as many volunteers that would come to the facility to participate in the project. Students and staff at Summerfield Healthcare Center will need to continue to collaborate throughout the year to monitor the volunteers who come to the facility and provide guidance as needed.

### **Budget Description and Justification**

The dollar amount requested from ENspire is \$250. The requested grant will fund the sample activity box for the site to recreate, printer copies of handouts and training resources, materials for client cards, and any left over amount will be allocated to refreshments to provide during training sessions. These items are essential to our project to aid the staff and volunteers who will be interacting with the patients at Summerfield Healthcare Center.

### **Faculty Advisors**

Gina Tucker-Roghi, OTD, OTR/L

### **Bio - Principal Contact**

My name is Victoria Ramia, and I am currently a second year master's student at Dominican University of California studying in the occupational therapy program. I earned my bachelor's degree at Sonoma State University, where I studied psychology and chemistry, while working and volunteering. I recently completed my Level I Fieldwork in Marin

County in an acute care setting with adults and seniors, which enhanced my excitement to continue working to serve this population throughout the completion of this project. Prior to the start of this occupational therapy program, I was employed at a speech, language, and learning clinic that was family-centered, where I worked with individuals of all ages, collaborated with the client's family members and other professionals in order to deliver the best care for each client. I look forward to continuing to enhance these professional and collaborative skills through the progression of this project.

#### **Collaborator Bios**

The program collaborators include students at Dominican University of California and staff from Summerfield Healthcare Center. The students are all completing their second year Entry Level Master's in Occupational Therapy. The students have completed Level I Fieldwork with the adults and seniors population in an acute care setting in Fall 2019, and will be completing Level I Fieldwork with the pediatric population in Spring 2020. Nhat Hoang studied psychology at the University of California, Irvine. Kiyomi Kuroda studied psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Victoria Ramia studied psychology and chemistry at Sonoma State University. Kelsy Wallace studied human development and family science at Oregon State University. Collaboration with staff at Summerfield Healthcare Center including JB Chua and Casen Bush. JB Chua is the Director of Rehabilitation and Casen Bush is the Administrator. Collaboration with the facility's occupational therapists, occupational therapist assistants, and activities director will be decided upon further discussion with JB Chua.

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