

The Fidget Widget Toolkit: A Positive Intervention Designed and Evaluated to Enhance Wellbeing for People in the Later Stage of Dementia

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Abstract : This study is an ongoing collaborative project between the University of Central Lancashire and the Alzheimer's Society to design and test the idea of using interactive tools for a person living with dementia and their carers. It is hoped that the tools will fulfill the possible needs of engagement and interaction as dementia progresses, therefore enhancing wellbeing and improving quality of life for the person with dementia and their carers. The project was informed by Kitwood's five psychological needs for producing wellbeing and explored evidence that fidgeting is often seen as a form of agitation and a negative symptom of dementia. Although therapy for agitation may be well established, there is a lack of appropriate items aimed at people in the later stage of dementia, that are not childlike or medical in their aesthetic. Individuals may fidget in a particular way and the tools in the Fidget Widget Toolkit have been designed to encourage repetitive movements of the hand, specifically to address the abilities of people with relatively advanced dementia. As an intervention, these tools provided a new approach that had not been tested in dementia care. Prototypes were created through an iterative design process and tested with a number of people with dementia and their carers, using quantitative and qualitative methods. Dementia Care Mapping was used to evaluate the impact of the intervention in group settings. Cohen Mansfield's Agitation Inventory was used to record the daily use and interest of the intervention for people in their usual place of residence. The results informed the design of a new set of devices to promote safe, stigma free fidgeting as a positive experience, meaningful activity and enhance wellbeing for people in the later stage of dementia. The outcomes addressed the needs of individuals by reducing agitation and restlessness through helping them to connect, engage and act independently, providing the means of doing something for themselves that they were able to do. The next stage will be to explore the commercial feasibility of the Fidget Widget Toolkit so that it can be introduced as good practice and innovation in dementia care. It could be used by care homes, with carers and their families to support wellbeing and lead the way in providing some positive experiences and person-centred approaches that are lacking in the later stage of dementia.

Keywords : dementia, design, fidgeting, healthcare, positive moments, quality of life, wellbeing

Conference Title : ICPPW 2017 : International Conference on Positive Psychology and Wellbeing

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : June 28-29, 2017