

Person-Centered Bathing of Individuals with Dementia

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Person Centered Bathing of Individuals with Dementia is a Joint Project of the Institute on Aging and the Cecil G. Sheps Center Program on Aging Disability and Long-Term Care, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the School of Nursing, Oregon Health Sciences University. Funding is provided by the Retirement Research Foundation, the Commonwealth Fund, the HCR-ManorCare Foundation, the Rothschild Foundation, the Extendicare Foundation, Arjo Inc, the National Institute on Aging, and the National Institute for Nursing Research.

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Overview

The Person Centered Bathing of Individuals with Dementia project is developing and disseminating CD-ROM and videotape training nationally to nursing assistants, nurses, long-term care administrators, family caregivers, and home health care providers. The training materials are based on results from an earlier research project, and they illustrate methods of bathing persons with dementia which can reduce difficult behaviors and increase comfort.

Solutions to Reducing Difficult Bathing Behaviors

Studies indicate that, of the over 3 million persons with Alzheimer's disease, the majority are difficult to bathe. This is particularly true in long-term care facilities, where bathing is often challenging, frustrating, and at times dangerous. Hitting, screaming, biting, and fighting are common occurrences during bathing persons with dementia. Over the past 10 years, a multi-institutional, multidisciplinary project team has developed methods of bathing persons with dementia, which markedly reduce agitated and aggressive behaviors, and increase comfort. This culminated in a randomized, controlled clinical trial, which had its outcomes measured by blinded raters who coded videotapes of nearly 500 baths and showers. These empirical, scientific outcome data demonstrated reductions as much as 70% in agitation and discomfort. Not only were our scientific results compelling, but we also gathered unique footage showing how new methods can change a battle into a bath experience. We asked for and received consent to use many of these videos for staff education. We published a book on our methods, *Bathing Without a Battle*, which was published by Springer in 2001. This has been well received and sold modestly.

Valuable Training Materials

Long-term care staff, homecare providers, and regulators do not often buy books or videos on a specialized topic such as bathing, so we asked for help to develop and disseminate training materials nationally. We received a grant from the Retirement Research Foundation to develop and disseminate a CD-ROM free of charge to 21,000 nursing homes, home health agencies, Alzheimer's Association Chapters, state ombudsmen, state nursing home surveyors, and federal nursing home surveyors. Supplemental grants are supporting development of a training videotape that will accompany the CD-ROM.