Cognitive Health and Aging: Group Activities to Maintain Brain Health

Emma DeRock

Agency: Chateau at Rivers Edge
Agency & Faculty Supervisors: Kim Adams & Professor Barbara Grigg

Cognitive decline is an issue plaguing many seniors, however, it is not a natural part of aging. Once signs of cognitive decline have become obvious, physical health may also be declining, leading to increased limitations and added reliance on others. By regularly participating in activities that stimulate the brain, cognitive impairment may be delayed or decreased. In order to help the residents of the Chateau @ Rivers Edge, this student researcher developed a program to incorporate brain stimulating activities in which the residents may choose to participate. This project consisted of one hour classes, once a week over 6 weeks. This activity was designed to challenge the brain and explored various levels of cognitive stimulation with a small number of residents in a group setting. Activities covered a wide range of subject matter such as math, science, geography, and language skills designed to challenge the participants intellectually. Although some residents showed apprehension initially, by the third session the participants were more comfortable and participation increased from 3 people in the first session to 9 people at the six week mark. This project was guided by the opinions of the participants from session to session. After each session the participants were asked to complete a survey about their experience. Participants reported feeling more self-confident about completing more complex intellectual activities. Many participants showed great improvement in the amount of time it took them to comprehend complex instruction, and a decrease in the amount of times directions needed to be repeated or explained before completion. In order to allow the residents an opportunity to continue this activity, a booklet of activities and resources of brain games for the Chateau’s activities department.
Hank and Fisher Senior Communities is a family business that has been creating exceptional places for seniors to call home for over 35 years and maintains four premier full-service senior living communities that are home to over 350 residents. They are built on the values of quality, care and hard work. As a family business, they are dedicated to providing respectful, compassionate care and special life-enhancement programs to meet residents' specific needs, to encourage meaningful relationships, and help them to feel at home from the day they move in. They also collaborate with many community organizations, like the Newman Catholic church which allows Hank Fisher Properties to provide additional support services for their residents. This type of community relationship led to the development and implementation of the “Seniors and Kids” Intergenerational Visiting Program. This Project linked Chateau residents with children from the Newman church community who volunteered for this creative project. The children who volunteered for the Visiting Program were welcomed by Chateau staff and residents. The staff assisted the student to develop simple projects and activities such as memory games, arts and crafts, that were intellectually and emotionally stimulating to the both the children and the residents. The effectiveness of the project was evaluated through a survey with a series of questions in terms of what feelings the seniors had about the program and their relationship with the children. Direct observation of moods and behaviors were also recorded. Five seniors and five children attended the program. All five seniors and children said that they had enjoyed the Visiting Program. One resident requested to continue the visits. Implementing this program showed that intergenerational programs can promote positive attitudes (more interest and participation and less sadness, anxiety), and a sense of belonging. The student developed a pamphlet of how this program was developed and it was given to the Chateau and the Newman church to ensure future visiting programs.

Physical activity has been shown to improve cardiovascular health in people who have experienced cardiac events or cardiovascular disease. This project examines the needs and background of the population at the Cardiovascular Wellness Program (CWP) and the formation of a 12-week rowing program that was held at the meeting place in Folsom Hall on the Sacramento State University campus. Participants included 9 older adults ages 56-86 who were already participating in the CWP and had some form of heart disease or a previous cardiac event. For 12 weeks, the participants were asked to complete 24 assigned workouts on the rowing machine. Participants were assessed with the Falls Risk Assessment, Duke Activity Status Index (DASI), Fullerton Advanced Balance (FAB) Scale, Senior Fitness Test, 50-meter and 500-meter fitness tests on the rowing machine at the beginning and end of the 12 weeks. One participant dropped out of the program in the first week, 4 participants completed a portion of the assigned workouts, and 4 participants completed all of the assigned workouts. Of the 8 participants who completed some or all of the workouts, 6 showed significant improvement in two or more areas of the Senior Fitness Test, all 5 participants who completed the 50 and 500-meter tests improved their times, and 3 participants improved their scores in the FAB Scale. There were no significant changes in scores for any participant in the Falls Risk Assessment or the DASI. The results of this field experiment suggest that rowing workouts promote further physical fitness in older adults who have already established consistent exercise patterns and that the improvements are more measurable with the Senior Fitness Test, FAB Scale, or 50 and 500-meter tests.
Mindfulness Meditation with Music Therapy
Alex Weir
Agency: Triple R Adult Day Center
Agency & Faculty Supervisors: Nina Moran and Professor Barbara Grigg

Triple R is a licensed adult day care program with a mission to provide a safe and enriching environment that preserves and maintains cognitive skills, physical strength, independence, dignity, and respect for older adults with memory loss and frailty. Dementia is a progressive illness in which older adults with dementia suffer from cognitive decline affecting their activities of daily living. Older adults with dementia who express enduring personalities according to continuity theory are better in maintaining their cognitive skills and physical strengths by participating in recreational activities. The student has implemented mindfulness meditation with music therapy in correlation with the agency's mission to preserve and maintain their participant's cognition and physical strength. The student conducted 30 to 45 minutes of meditation and music therapy every week with the participants at Triple R. The participants were instructed to follow the student's example by exercising yoga stretches, picturing mental guided imagery, and focusing on breathing techniques. Studies on Mindfulness meditation with music therapy effects physiological and behavioral functioning. Evidence has shown that meditation lowers epinephrine, cortisol, blood pressure, pain, and stress. It has also shown to have beneficial effects in relieving anxiety, agitation, and depression. Mindfulness meditation with music therapy was well received and the student received positive feedbacks from the participants and the staff of Triple R. The staff has shown interest in conducting future meditation and music therapy. The student provided a written and an instructional video in how to conduct mindfulness meditation with music therapy. The final project was reviewed by the site supervisor and was found to be a valuable activity in preserving and maintaining their participants' cognition and physical strength.

10:25
Welcome to Oak Ridge Packet
Megan Gilmore
Agency: Oak Ridge Healthcare Center
Agency & Faculty Supervisors: Michael Demes & Dr. Donna Jensen

Oak Ridge Health Center is in need of an organized information and resource packet available to the patients and family members on arrival to the care center. There have been previous attempts to provide such a resource for patients and family members to refer to when unaware of a service provided, a department head to contact, or even the due date of a payment. This project created a new resource packet with a professional appearance. These welcome packets will assist with the transition to Oak Ridge and promote a genuine, positive first impression about the center. It is hoped that this will reduce care conference time and alleviate unneeded stress on staff, patients, and caregivers. In addition to the packets, patients will receive bags with necessities for their stay including: a brush, toothbrush, toothpaste etc. An evaluation with five questions has been administered with a scale of 1-5 on how much of a change staff believes this packet will make. Included in the evaluation are comments and suggestions from the Director of Rehabilitation, the Admissions Director, the Director of Nursing, and the Administrator. Overall, after administering evaluation forms with the five-point scale, the staff stated that packets will improve communication in the initial stages of admission and promote a healthy first impression for Oak Ridge as the highest.

10:45
BREAK
11:00
Resident Histories
Paula Vagnone
Agency: Monroe Lodge Eskaton
Agency & Faculty Supervisors: Tristin Benjamin & Mae Denman & Dr. Donna Jensen

Eskaton Monroe Lodge is an independent living community with services. The Resident Histories project was designed to optimize the functioning of the Monroe Lodge community and to enhance the quality of life of residents who reside there. The primary purpose of the project was to promote Eskaton’s “Thrill of a Lifetime” initiative and give the Resident Services Director a tool to optimize health, wellness, and socialization activities among the residents. The project had two components: (1) to interview residents by following a written personal history questionnaire and (2) to provide Monroe Lodge residents the opportunity to reminisce and do a life review on a micro-scale. Thirty-one residents were interviewed throughout the course of the allotted project time. The history questionnaire was developed by the student intern in consultation with the Director of Resident Services and the Executive Director at Monroe Lodge. Of the thirty-one residents that were interviewed, fifteen expressed that there was something in their lives that they always wanted to do but were not able to do. The Executive Director of Monroe Lodge stated that the project was successful because the intern was able to take the time necessary to interview residents and discover their life histories and “Thrill of a Lifetime” wishes. The Executive Director of Monroe Lodge will coordinate any “Thrill of a Lifetime” wishes of residents with Eskaton’s Administrative Center. The Resident Services Director will continue to use the Resident Histories tool to create activities for Monroe Lodge residents and to obtain a brief personal history of Monroe Lodge residents.

11:20
Improving the Interdisciplinary Teams Understanding of the CAHPS Hospice Survey
Lucrecia Raimondi
Agency: Yolo Hospice
Agency & Faculty Supervisors: Dr. Gwendolyn Koltoff & Dr. Cheryl Osborne

Beginning in 2015, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services mandated that hospice agencies participate in the Consumer Assessment of Health Care Providers and Systems (CAHPS) Hospice Survey (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2015). It evaluates both patient and caregiver experience with hospice services. It is mailed to caregivers after the death of a hospice patient. The main measures of the survey include: communication, caregiver education, patient comfort, and emotional support. This project served to introduce, prepare, and educate the members of the interdisciplinary team at Yolo Hospice to be evaluated in these areas. The members of the team included; social workers, hospice aides, and spiritual care counselors. The intern selected survey questions that related to each discipline and presented them in the form a PowerPoint. Along with the survey questions, the intern developed reflection questions based on evidence-based research to stimulate discussion. They were presented with a PowerPoint on the different measures to gain an understanding and discuss the different measures in regards to communication and caregiver education. The interdisciplinary team received an interactive introduction to the CAHPS survey, and the reflection questions provided insights from the team member’s perspective. The team will be able to better meet needs of the older adult patients and caregivers as specified by the survey. The agency was left with the PowerPoints and they will be able to revise them as the results of the survey are available.

11:40
Stroke Resource Guide
The purpose of this project was to set up a stroke support group for older adults at Eskaton Care Center Fair Oaks. Eskaton Care Center Fair Oaks does not provide a resource guide or group activities for their long term residents who have suffered from a stroke. The proposal was to have monthly groups to address different topics such as reminiscence therapy, aphasia, coping mechanisms, and the resources that are available. After several failed attempts to get an interdisciplinary team involved in the process of administering the stroke support group the project was restructured to provide educational material as a way to link the residents to resources that are available to them. The Stroke Resource Guide is included in the welcoming new neighbor’s packet, which was developed with two other gerontology student interns. Residents will receive this packet when they initially enter the community. The stroke Resource Guide also includes coping mechanisms, aphasia therapy, and local area resources. The project was evaluated by conducting pre and post interviews with the residents who received the resources. Resident stated that the resource was beneficial to them because it provided them with ways to access affordable aphasia therapy and also provides them coping strategies.

12:00
LUNCH

12:45
A Guide to Recruitment of Volunteers for the Development of a Music and Wellness Program in a Non-Profit Hospice Agency
Reina Ramos
Agency: Mercy Hospice
Agency & Faculty Supervisors: Terry Stewart LCSW & Professor Barbara Grigg

Mercy Hospice is a non-profit agency that provides symptom management quality care for patients who have an end of life diagnosis and have 6 months or less to live. They provide compassionate care to terminally ill patients and their families and provide a holistic form of care with a professional health care team. They have additional services within their volunteer program, such as their SOUL volunteer program that provides patients with animal companionship. In the future, they will develop other services that will enhance the wellness of patients by enhancing quality of life. One additional service for the wellness element is providing music to the patients and their families either by volunteers or through portable listening devices. There is plenty of research on the positive effects of music on the elderly. For hospice, the music will not be used with the intention of the patient getting better, however, the performances of the music volunteers and music listening (digital) could create a more relaxing environment and be an uplifting experience. This project provided a suggested resource guide to recruit music and wellness volunteers for the potential development of a music and wellness program for Mercy Hospice with the idea of also helping others develop such programs. In addition to creating the guide, the project also consisted of providing and setting up a music and wellness station in the office of the agency for volunteers, home health aides, and other staff members to check-out music supplies, such as a portable speaker, headphones, and an iPod, to bring with them during patient visits. Music listening through the headphones can be provided as a soothing activity for patients during the routine visits from the hospice staff and volunteers. The student measured the positive effectiveness of the project with a follow-up discussion with staff and volunteers. Faculty and the supervisor reviewed the final product of the project. The student got positive feedback from supervisor, staff, and volunteers during presentations given to them. Staff and volunteers reported excitement and anticipation of the use of the music station and the implementation of music with their patients.
Mercy Hospice has been providing services to terminally ill people for nearly 35 years. Their mission is to help individuals with life-threatening illnesses devote their final days of life at peace, being comfortable and conserving their dignity. Mercy Hospice provides pain and symptom management to patients, while also providing support to their caretakers. This organization is interested in finding new ways to increase the quality of care provided to patients and their loved ones. There are other methods of care for patients, other than medicine, that have been demonstrated to help decrease anxiety and pain in dying individuals. One alternative method is massage therapy, which is supported by numerous studies in aiding hospice patients and their families. Mercy Hospice was interested in developing a volunteer massage therapy program for their organization to provide to their clients. There are many steps in developing a program that need to be in place before recruiting certified massage therapist volunteers. The project provided a structure for recruiting and required qualifications of Massage Therapists for future volunteerism. With the support from staff, faculty, and supervisor, the student provided this structure through the development of a Guide to recruit massage therapist volunteers and presented it to the agency and faculty. The student received positive feedback from supervisor, volunteers, and patients interested in the development of this program. Mercy Hospice volunteers, staff, and my supervisor found that this guide will be helpful in the recruitment of massage therapists.

Hospice is a place of holistic, palliative care for the patient and their loved ones. Yet some families report poor care over evenings, weekends, and holidays. With the Tuck-In calls families will be reassured for the weekend and will be asked if they need any other assistance before heading into the weekend and if they do someone will be able to go out and meet the family’s needs. The clients will also be reminded that there is staff on call ready to go if something should come up and the family needs help from the hospice team and the family is reminded not to hesitate to contact the on-call nurse because the nurses are there to help and calling them will not bother them. The overall goal of this project was to improve patient and family care in general but especially on evenings and weekends in order to receive an “excellent” marking on the CHAPS survey. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of this project the team will wait for the CHAPS survey scores for the month following the project implementation date, and all following months, and see if the scores have improved over time since the date of the launch of the Tuck-in Calls.
1:45

Dementia: A Person-Centered Approach: In-service Training Program
Veronica Brookshaw
Agency: Northstar Rancho Cordova
Agency & Faculty Supervisors: Jo Franklin & Professor Deon Batchelder

Within the past few years, memory-care communities’ saw a 35% increase in residents. This growing need for senior living communities will also increase the need to employ skilled care staff that understands dementia. The Dementia: A Person Centered Approach (DAPCA) in-service training program educates staff on how dementia affects the individual through utilization of a holistic care model, can support and enhance quality of life. The concepts covered in DAPCA were chosen based upon the results of a survey involving Northstar staff. The concepts of dementia that staff felt they wanted to know more about were formulated into in-services. The first in-service, What is Dementia? discussed the definition of dementia, the progression, and how the disease impacts the mind, body, and spirit. The second in-service, Understanding Dementia Holistically, focuses on how to effectively work with difficult behaviors associated with dementia. In order to increase effectiveness of the DAPCA program, methods were utilized to include: open-ended questions to engage conversation, games to test retention of information, and group activities in order to practice through role-play. At the end of each in-service, participants were given a copy of the information covered in addition to a questionnaire to measure how well the in-services improved their understanding of dementia. The results of the data showed that 78% of participants had gained an improved understanding of the concepts after attending the DAPCA program. Additionally, overall 100% of participants found that the DAPCA program was useful within their current profession.

2:05

An In-Room Service to Promote Wellbeing and Social Interactions
Allison Araullo
Agency: Eskaton Care Center Greenhaven
Agency & Faculty Supervisors: Medina Van Alstyne & Deon Batchelder

Eskaton Care Center Greenhaven (ECCG) provides older adults with a variety of physical, spiritual, and emotional opportunities to improve their quality of life and overall wellbeing. The standard practice is to distribute to each resident a monthly calendar of daily scheduled activities within the facility and include monthly outings within the city of Sacramento. This project will provide in-room services and activities to reach the residents that do not participate within the community, since residents have differing interests, needs, and issues. Some of the activities and agendas included are quick check-ins, personal assistance with ADLs, puzzles, reading material, and aromatherapy. Residents will be visited at least three times per week to maintain and improve their overall wellbeing, quality of life, decrease depression, provide social interaction, and mental stimulation. The volunteers, who conduct the visits, will also benefit from the one-on-one engagement with the residents as they discuss more intimate relationships and personal experiences. To evaluate the effectiveness of this project, the intern completed resident surveys consisting of their personal preferences, interviewed volunteers that will conduct the in-room visits, and consulted with the Activity Director to gain verbal feedback. The results of the project revealed, of the 35 resident participants, only 15 residents completed all interview questions, while all four volunteers completed the interview questions. In conclusion, the outcome of this project found that the participating residents showed social improvements, increased activity levels, and more positive attitudes.

2:25

Eskaton Resident and Staff Recognition Series
The ability to form close bonds between staff, clients, and the surrounding community is paramount to be a successful agency for aging. Just as important is being able to bring in new qualified staff and new clients. One such way to create bonds between staff, clients, and the organization is to recognize staff members for their successes and hard work for the organization as well as recognizing clients for their uniqueness and life success. The lodge collaborative program at Eskaton decided to expand and create a project to do just that. Eskaton’s Department of Social media decided to lead this project with the help of a CSUS Gerontology student to not only recognize staff members but to extend their recognition of the residents all across the many Eskaton communities in a video series. The plan is to get the video series project rolling with an initial 4 episodes before the end of May 2015. The project serves the organization on two levels both within and outside the organization. Within the organization the recognition of their staff members allows all staff to know that Eskaton truly appreciates the hard work their staff provides and wishes to showcase the deeds performed to inspire those around them. This increases morale among the staff as they know that their hard work is being recognized and it results in a better working environment and has positive outcomes. This is very similar for the residents as well. By recognizing the inspiring stories of the residents, it shows the resident and their neighbors that Eskaton is proud to have these individuals under their care and wants to let everyone know how incredible their clients are. This creates a closer relationship between staff and client and creates a healthier home environment overall. The Resident and Staff Recognition project serves to let the surrounding communities know how dedicated the individuals who work for Eskaton are and what marvelous and diverse individuals are coming to Eskaton for services. Showcasing each individuals story and sharing them on social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook demonstrates Eskaton’s commitment to older adult services and how proud the organization is of their staff and residents. The potential outcome is the ability to bring in and hire more qualified staff and bring in new family and clients to Eskaton. Throughout the semester the student has interviewed individuals selected by various Eskaton communities to be recognized. Each interview was filmed and edited to best share the inspiring story and was uploaded to the various social media outlets. Success of this project is based on the quantifiable data such as the increased number of views of these videos as compared to previous video content put out by pre-recognition project Eskaton and the qualitative effects of those staff and residents who view and share what they viewed on these videos.