

OCALA HEALTH AND REHABILITATION

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Final Report for project #AFA16

Our vision for our proposal was to create an outdoor environment for a "Natural Program" for our 22 bed Dementia Unit. The quality of life would be enhanced by the residents empowerment to select areas of interest in the outdoor courtyard. Different stations were created for the residents enjoyment. The stations include: stand-up garden center, an aviary, rakes and tools and a gazebo surrounded by a colorful garden and walkways. Goals for the residents include increased physical activity, improved fine motor skills, appetite stimulation, decreased signs of depression and ultimately a decreased feeling of being institutionalized.

Physical activity level and fine motor skills were assessed using the Barthel Index. Each resident was evaluated using the Barthel Index prior to and again four months after the implementation of the nature program. Forty-three percent (43%) of the residents evaluated remained consistent with the same score. Forty-three percent (43%) had an improvement in activity level and fine motor skills. Fourteen percent (14%) had a decline in activity level and fine motor skills. Observation with one resident showed a 10 point improvement with frequent use of the outside courtyard using the Barthel Index. Interviews with staff and family revealed an overall consensus that the outside courtyard enabled residents to do physical activities during the day which improved their overall abilities. One R.N. states "they have increased independence". Hence, eighty-six percent (86%) of residents either remained consistent or had improved in their physical activity level and fine motor skills.

Resident appetite was assessed by evaluating weight records and appetite stimulant use prior and again four (4) months after initiation of the nature garden. There was a noticeable, positive, difference in the residents weights after initiation of the nature program. Forty-six (46%) of residents had a positive weight gain. Thirty-eight (38%) of residents weight remained stable. There was no change in usage of appetite stimulants during this time frame. The increase in activity level had a positive impact on their appetite and weight gain. We attribute this to the nature garden.



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By using sections, E1, E4, J1 and K3 as a reference, each resident was evaluated with the Cornell Scale for Depression. Forty-three percent (43%) remained the same, while thirty-six percent (36%) had a decline on the Cornell Scale of Depression. Evaluation of antidepressant medication before and again four months after initiation of the program, revealed twenty-nine percent (29%) of the residents were on medication before initiation compared to twenty-one (21%) after the initiation of the nature garden. Interviews with staff revealed when residents are tearful and upset, they guide the residents to the courtyard. Staff state residents instantly become joyful and comment on the flowers, birds and scenery. One particular resident will look at the flowers and tell staff "I remember when my sister planted these two years ago". Even though evaluations of the Cornell Depression Scale do not indicate an increase in mood, interviews with the family and staff report the outside nature garden has had a positive impact.

Surveys from family, friends and staff are overwhelmingly positive. One family member stated "visiting their loved one was less stressful since the nature garden". Another family member stated "he takes his loved one outside on visits and their loved one is very calm and talkative during their visits". Another family member stated that smaller rakes would be nice. He states when he visits, he watches residents get involved with picking up the leaves on the ground". The gazebo was not used by residents in the beginning; however, the gazebo now seems to be their main focus. The least used area is the manipulative garden. Overall, the nature garden continues to create a positive outcome on residents quality of life, appetite, physical activity level and on their fine motor skills.























