

N. NIJHOF, J.E.W.C. VAN GEMERT-PIJNEN, H. VAN RIJN, J. VAN HOOF, E. SEYDEL. 'The Chitchatters': A leisure activity for people with dementia to stimulate social interaction. *Gerontechnology* 2010;9(2):316; doi:10.4017/gt.2010.09.02.155.00 **Purpose** Worldwide, there are 30 million people with dementia (PWD) in 2009 and 100 million in 2050, respectively. These numbers show the need for a change in care for PWD. Leisure is one of these care aspects. Leisure activities can support PWD in several ways: meeting basic needs, providing comfort and social interaction, and reducing boredom, agitation, and isolation¹. An exemplary activity targeted at meeting these needs is 'De Klessebessers (KB)' (The Chitchatters), which aims to stimulate social interaction among PWD and provide comfort with supporting technology². This is innovative since technology for PWD generally concentrates on safety and monitoring activities³. The activity comprises a radio, television, telephone, and treasure box. **Method** This study's focus follows from the original aim of the KB-designers; to stimulate social interaction. In a nursing home and day care centre, the KB game was played with different groups of PWD (n=21: 12 females, 9 males, mean MMSE=17, range 3-28). In the morning KB (with technology), and in the afternoon an activity called 'Questiongame' (without technology) were played for 45 minutes. These activities were played twice in a two-month period, and outcomes were compared in terms of impact on social interaction. Group sizes ranged from 3 to 8 PWD assisted by 1 or 2 activity therapists. Two researchers observed the players during the activity with the Oshkosh Social Behavior Coding (OSBC) scale, which encompasses both verbal and non-verbal social and nonsocial behaviour. These behaviours can have a person-initiated and other-initiated character (quantitative study)⁴. A total of 6 activity therapists were interviewed on the KB afterwards (qualitative study). **Results & Discussion** The quantitative results showed significantly higher scores for KB for the total of social interaction compared to Questiongame. Most of the behaviour is other-initiated (activity therapist). PWD with a lower MMSE score showed more non-verbal behaviour. For PWD with a MMSE score below 7, there was no difference in social interaction between the two activities. According to the qualitative research, KB triggered more social interaction, since the movies and music were stimulating the players to initiate a conversation, to which other players responded. The results of this research correspond with earlier research, which concludes that leisure activities with technology can show positive results on well-being⁵.

References

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Figure 1 The Chitchatters