

A. ASTELL, E. DOVE, K. COTNAM. **Group digital activities for people with dementia.** *Gerontechnology* 2016;15(suppl):119s; doi:10.4017/gt.2016.15.s.888.00 **Purpose** Engaging in meaningful occupation is an important human activity that can become difficult for people with dementia to achieve independently¹. Digital technologies provide the opportunity for people to engage in a wide range of activities either alone or with others but to be used most effectively need a good understanding of how best to select and present these for people with dementia². The aim of this project was to explore the ways an interactive games technology (Xbox Kinect) could be used to provide a stimulating and engaging group activity for people living with dementia in the community. **Method** The study took place in a specialized day programme for people who have dementia that has progressed beyond the mild stage. Participant (n=13; mean age=77 years; 6 males, 7 females) observation was used to gain a good understanding of the environment and capture naturalistic data on the group activity. The focus was on looking at how the day centre clients were introduced to the Xbox games, how they were supported to play them and how they participated in this as a group activity. **Results & Discussion** The findings revealed that a range of games from the Kinect sports software were used including bowling, darts and baseball (*Figure 1*). Although these are presented as single player games, people take turns and the rest of the group supports them with comments such as “good effort!”, “nice try!” Accommodation is made for people in wheelchairs or needing other assistance, with staff supporting each client in relation to their specific needs. The findings highlight three important features for making the most of this technology to provide engagement in meaningful activity for people living with dementia. First is the training of staff so that they are able to tailor their support to the individual needs of the clients to enable them to play the games. Second is for all of the clients to be able to participate, irrespective of cognitive or other (e.g. mobility) challenges. Third is the creation of a positive social environment where people play ‘independently together’ as a group. This latter challenge the usual conventions about single player games but is an important function of game playing for people living with dementia.

References

1. Astell A J. Supporting a good life with dementia. In: Prendergast D, Garattini C, editors, Ageing and the Digital Life Course. Brooklyn: Berghan; 2015
2. Astell A. Technology and fun for happy old age. In: Sixsmith A, Gutman G, editors, Technologies for Active Aging. New York: Springer; 2013

Keywords: digital activities, dementia, interactive games, group interaction

Address: Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences, Whitby, Ontario, Canada;

E: astella@ontarioshores.ca



Figure 1. Participant being supported to play Kinect sports bowling