

OPP: DEMENTIA & TECHNOLOGY

Combatting apathy in long term care facilities with eReaders: A pilot study

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Purpose Research has shown that more than 80% of people living in long term care facilities have apathy (loss of interest or motivation) that can adversely impact their quality of life, cognition, and wellbeing (Zuideima et al. 2009; Nijsten et al., 2017). Despite the availability of simple interventions to improve apathy, health care workers fail to address this issue (Jao et., 2019). The aim of this project was to pilot test the benefits of using Kobo eReaders (a cost-effective handheld device that is meant for reading and storing digital books) to mitigate apathy and improve the wellbeing of residents in long term care facilities across Northern British Columbia, Canada. **Method** This is a mixed method study. Residents with interest in reading were approached. Cognitively impaired residents who were unable to consent were excluded. All consented participants completed a self-report assessment questionnaire about apathy. Participants were given a Kobo eReader preloaded with books of interest and instructed on the use of the Kobo eReader. All those who enrolled participated in the program for a period of 8 to 12 weeks. After the intervention was completed, a post-intervention assessment was conducted. A logbook was kept to track the participants' engagement during group reading sessions. We also collected data about the other benefits derived from participating in the program through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Nvivo software. **Results and Discussion** Out of the 20 participants, 14 were females. Age ranged between 51 and 98 years old. All participants were educated. Eight people reported apathy symptoms at the start of the program, however, at the end of the program, six people had recovered from apathy. Furthermore, majority were highly engaged in reading activities throughout the program implementation, and all participants expressed that being part of the program had motivated them to engage more in group activities and read more than they would have without the device. The results showed that reading using a simple and cost-effective technology such as the Kobo eReader may improve apathy and contribute to feelings of wellbeing among residents in long term care facilities. In addition, older people in long term care facilities were not only opened to try out new technologies but are willing to use technologies that support them to continue what they have always enjoy. This highlights the opportunities for novel types of activities and actions that are different from daily routines in long term care facilities. However, it is important to note that this technology cannot replicate the empathy and personal connection that healthcare staff offer.

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