

H. van Rijn, J. van Hoof, P.J. Stappers. 'De Klessebessers': a leisure game for dementia. *Gerontechnology* 2008; 7(2):196. The provision of leisure and pleasant activities to people with dementia in group-living environments is a serious challenge that complements daily care. Most games and leisure devices are unfit for people with dementia due to diminished cognitive skills and other symptoms accompanying the syndrome. This stresses the need for leisure devices that meet the actual skills and needs of people with dementia. However, designing for this particular user group is a difficult task. A designer cannot precisely experience how these people perceive experiences in daily life. This paper describes the design of a group leisure product called 'de Klessebessers' (freely translated as 'chitchatters')<sup>1</sup>, which was developed to stimulate social interaction between people with dementia. An important aspect of the design process was the involvement of employees of a day-care centre, relatives, and last but not least people with dementia themselves. **Methods** In order to gain insight in the needs, preferences, and experiences of people with dementia we conducted participatory observations, interviews and context mapping techniques<sup>2</sup> with relatives, care professionals and people with dementia themselves. Based on the information gathered, a leisure game was developed. In order to obtain valuable feedback from people with dementia, a working prototype of the concept was developed and used with people in a day care centre. **Results and discussion** We learnt that people with dementia search for social contact. However, having social contact with fellow-sufferers is difficult, because all repeatedly forget what the interaction was about. At the same time, people's long-term memory often functions perfectly. People react positively to triggers from the past, an aspect also used in reminiscing. This also forms the basis of our design. 'De Klessebessers' consist of four every day objects (a television, radio, telephone and suitcase) put in a circle. These objects were given an old-fashioned, somewhat cartoonesque, look on purpose (*Figure 1*). Each object can trigger memories in its own specific way, for instance, by playing movies and songs, telling poems, or revealing an object. One at a time, a specific object asks for attention of the group by means of a lamp placed near the object that turns on. The object does not reveal its content yet, but waits for a simple action by a participant in the circle, such as pushing the television button, or turning on the radio's volume. The test showed that the people enjoyed interacting together with help of 'de Klessebessers', because they could themselves generate happy moments.

### References

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*Figure 1* The prototype in use by people with dementia. (left) an overview of the ring with the four objects (right) each object in use by an adult with dementia