

PAPER

Cognition, Dementia, and Intervention

H. OWENS, D. KAUFMAN. *The power of digital storytelling: Benefits and opportunities for people living with dementia*. *Gerontechnology* 2018;17(Suppl):71s; <https://doi.org/10.4017/gt.2018.17.s.071.00> **Purpose** Currently, 564,000 Canadians live with dementia with a predicted increase to 937,000 by 2031¹. Digital storytelling is a form of narrative that creates short films using media including photos, sound, music, and videos². Past research has found benefits of storytelling for persons with dementia, including enhanced relationships and communication^{3,4}. Our project's purpose was to explore and understand the experiences of digital storytelling as perceived and expressed by the storytellers - persons with dementia. **Method** Our project was carried out at three sites in Canada: Edmonton, Vancouver and Toronto. This presentation reports data from the Vancouver site. The researcher met with participants over 6 to 12 sessions, where persons with dementia created digital stories and talked about their experience. The sessions varied for each participant depending on their story and background. Data included observational field notes, audio recordings from the workshop sessions, and interviews that were transcribed and analyzed. **Results & Discussion** Participants enjoyed the process of creating digital stories, despite some challenges with communication, memory and using technology. The act of sharing stories from the past was positive, stimulated memory and recall, and an effective way to preserve memories for their family and children. For some participants, their digital story connected with viewers to create a dialogue about their disease and allowed them to tell their story before their disease progressed. One participant stated, "I know that I will eventually probably lose my ability to speak, so then I won't be able to tell my story that well verbally. But there it is digitally." Participant's experience creating their digital stories evoked a range of emotions from joy and laughter to sadness and tears. The process provided insight into best practices for digital storytelling for persons with dementia. *Figure 1* shows the researcher working with one participant in their home to create their digital story. For persons with dementia, digital storytelling appears to be a meaningful, rewarding, and viable way to share and preserve stories.

References

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Figure 1. Creating a digital story together