

Executive Summary

Football reminiscence for men with dementia in a care home: a 12 week pilot study in Scotland

Alzheimer Scotland Centre for
Policy and Practice,
University of the West of Scotland

Dr Karen Watchman
Professor Debbie Tolson
Norrie Gallagher
Lynsey Cameron
Máire Doyle



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Research team:

Dr Karen Watchman, University of the West of Scotland
Professor Debbie Tolson, University of the West of Scotland
Norrie Gallagher, Football Reminiscence Facilitator
Lynsey Cameron, NHS Lanarkshire
Máire Doyle, NHS Lanarkshire

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Background

There is a growing recognition of the benefits to care home residents, particularly individuals with dementia, of meaningful activities that reflect individual interest and preference. Football-based reminiscence activities are gaining attention and are thought to be of particular interest to men, many of whom disengage in activities that they associate with female interests. Despite the growing popularity of football-based reminiscence, there is a lack of evidence-informed guidance over methods of delivery and understanding about the training required to deliver such interventions. This appears contrary to care home demographics that reflect an increasing number of residents with dementia. With this context in mind, the pilot study was developed to contribute to the sparse evidence base for football reminiscence with male care home residents who have dementia.

Aim

The aim was to collaboratively pilot and refine a 12-week programme of evidence-informed football reminiscence for delivery to a group of male care home residents with dementia.

Design and methods

The study collated a range of evidence in order to reflect the different elements of football reminiscence in a care home and its value as a meaningful activity. This included determining the impact on individuals who participated, in addition to the practical aspects of intervention delivery in a care home environment. Data collection methods over the twelve week period included:

- audio recorded and transcribed group football reminiscence sessions.
- football reminiscence facilitator reflective log.
- documentary photography.
- care home staff reflective log.
- research team field notes based on overt non-participant observation.
- data routinely collected in the care home such as sleep, falls, nutrition and medication.

Thematic analysis sought to critically identify issues and themes which were included in case descriptions for five regularly attending men from three different care homes; three other men were sporadic attenders.

Inclusion Criteria

To be included in the pilot study it was a requirement that the men involved:

- had dementia.
- were resident in one of the participating care homes.
- were able to consent to take part.
- expressed an interest in football.

Findings

The impact on individuals of participation in the football reminiscence programme:

- Increased sociability and enjoyment.
- Anticipation of attending each week.
- Increased participation in group activity.
- Pride at being positioned as experts, for example some of the men who had extensive football knowledge, at times beyond the scope of the facilitator.
- Being challenged: football and local knowledge should not be underestimated even if a verbal response is not immediately forthcoming.
- Improvement in dementia symptomology:
 - potential for improved sleep during the night after a session
 - increased verbal communication where this had previously been declining
 - accurate recall although this was not always responded to by a helper or the facilitator as the response was often not immediately forthcoming
 - increased engagement and self-awareness, such as bathing and dressing in preparation for the football reminiscence sessions.

The impact on individuals of participation in the football reminiscence programme:

- There was a requirement to differentiate between content (some football knowledge) and process (procedure, tools and appropriate interaction). Although both are important, the process has been shown to be more important than the content to support the inclusion of men with differing levels of ability and subsequent group dynamics.
- A staff member or helper who is experienced at supporting individuals with dementia was required to support the facilitator at all sessions, to minimise the potential for increased dementia symptomology:
 - modelling behaviour – repeating what someone else has said, or mimicking actions of another person
 - confusion or agitation in the late afternoon, referred to as sundowning – this should be considered when planning the time of intervention.
- There was a need to be alert to sensory impairment that may impact an individual's participation.
- To maximise participation, memorabilia should be incorporated that stimulates all of the senses: audio, visual, oral, touch and smell.
- The importance of establishing ground rules was determined, this should include clarifying the importance of helpers not answering for group members, but instead supporting individuals to contribute at their own pace. It should also include the importance of support staff not being influenced by their own football or religious affiliation.
- Clear and easy to understand direction was required, which may need to be regularly repeated.

- Abstract concepts, such as red and yellow cards, were less successful.
- Caution is urged to ensure an appropriate response to negative memories, which may not be associated with football.
- For some men, or as dementia progresses, consideration should be given to football reminiscence sessions delivered more often each week and of shorter duration.
- Organisational support is needed to: provide transport if required, enable delivery of the intervention in the same room to avoid confusion due to change in routine, ensure that this room is large enough to accommodate wheelchairs, helpers and an appropriate size of tables.
- Shared project ownership between facilitator, staff and host organisation can support efficacy in delivery.
- There is an increased potential for illness and bereavement among care home residents, which can impact on participation or wellbeing.
- There is a need to ensure that training in dementia care is provided for care home staff, with football reminiscence training made available for activity coordinators.

Conclusion

The 12-week pilot study identified process and practical issues related to the specific context of delivery in a care home environment, concluding that football reminiscence has the potential to have a positive impact on people with dementia and on dementia symptomology, including self-awareness, recall, anticipation and social inclusion.

A planned outcome of this pilot project has been the co-creation of guidance for best practice in football reminiscence interventions, with the recommendation that this guidance be adopted as part of developing safe and sustainable long-term football reminiscence sessions in a care home environment. Please contact Alzheimer Scotland Centre for Policy and Practice for a copy of the Hamilton Football Reminiscence Protocol for Care Home Residents with Dementia.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Research

1. Further research is justified to investigate person-centred outcomes of an intervention based on the Hamilton Football Reminiscence Protocol for Care Home Residents with Dementia.
2. To develop and pilot football reminiscence that is inclusive of women.

Recommendations for Care Home Practice

3. That football focussed reminiscence be considered as a meaningful and potentially therapeutic activity for care home residents with dementia and an existing interest in football.
4. That care home staff commit to embed reminiscence work safely into their practice and to recognise when this is, and when it is not, a meaningful activity for residents.
5. To ensure that care home regulators look beyond the availability of football reminiscence to understand the structure and support available, remaining cognisant of the importance of training for facilitators and support for dementia symptomology.

Recommendations for Education

6. That staff are supported and have access to appropriate training in both dementia care and reminiscence activities to ensure that facilitation is taken forward in a planned and person centred manner.



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Alzheimer Scotland Centre for Policy and Practice,
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University of the West of Scotland,
Caird Street,
Hamilton ML3 0JB,
Scotland.

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Copies of the final report are available on request from Alzheimer Scotland Centre for Policy and Practice, Institute of Healthcare, Policy and Practice, School of Health, Nursing and Midwifery, University of the West of Scotland, Caird Street, Hamilton, ML3 0JB, Scotland.

Telephone +44 (0) 1698 283100

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