

Eli's Rehab Report

CLINICAL REHAB ROUNDUP :OTs: Try a TAP for Your Patients With Dementia

The Tailored Activity Program to Reduce Behavioral Symptoms in Individuals With Dementia: Feasibility, Acceptability, and Replication Potential. Gitlin LN, Winter L, Vause Earland T, Adel Herge E, Chernett NL, Piersol CV, Burke JP. Gerontologist. 2009 May 6. Thomas Jefferson University's Jefferson Center for Applied Research on Aging and Health conducted a study to assess the value of the Tailored Activity Program (TAP) for individuals with dementia. TAP is a home-based occupational therapy intervention that aims to reduce behavioral symptoms and caregiver burden. In a four-month period involving eight sessions, the person implementing TAP identifies preserved capabilities, previous roles, habits, and interests of individuals with dementia; develop activities customized to individual profiles; and train families in activity use.

In the study, researchers documented time spent and ease conducting assessments and observed receptivity of TAP. For each implemented prescribed activity, caregivers reported the amount of time their relatives spent in activity and perceived benefits.

Findings: Assessments were easy to administer, taking an average of two 1-hour sessions. Of 170 prescribed activities, families used 81.5 percent, for an average of four times for 23 min between treatment sessions. Caregivers reported high confidence in using activities. For example 86 percent were less upset with behavioral symptoms. Researchers also noted a 93 percent confidence in enhanced skills and a 95 percent confidence in personal control. In addition, interventionists observed 100 percent enhanced engagement and 98 percent pleasure in individuals with dementia during sessions.

In short, TAP reduced behaviors that trigger nursing home placement and the amount of time families spent supervising and providing care, the American Occupational Therapy Association said in a release. This study may be of particular interest to therapists administering post-acute rehab. The right therapy could even help prevent hospital admission, experts point out.

"Occupational therapy practitioners are uniquely qualified to evaluate individual capabilities; engage individuals with dementia in activities; help families learn specific communication, task and environmental simplification strategies, and to take care of themselves," said head researcher **Laura N. Gitlin**.