

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Care Planning: Shed Light On Depression, Behaviors To Improve Outcomes

Light therapy, other novel remedies can be just what the doctor ordered.

A case of the blues can be improved by more than pharmaceuticals alone.

That's the premise behind **Baldomero Lopez State Veterans Nursing Home's** plans to use light therapy and a sensory stimulation modality to rein in its residents' depression and behavioral symptoms. The goal is to improve residents' quality of life and reduce the prevalence of psychoactive medications.

The interdisciplinary team plans to offer halogen light therapy in a room for 10 to 15 minutes a day for residents identified as having mood issues. Studies show halogen lighting may help depression or "sundowning," says **Rebecca Yackel**, a former surveyor and administrator of the facility in Land O' Lakes, FL.

The facility also uses Snoezelen, a multi-sensory therapy process daily for residents with dementia and mood/behavior issues. "The system stimulates all of a person's senses (auditory, visual, olfactory and tactile)," explains Yackel. "The person who uses the system calms down. We believe that use of the therapy has lessened residents' needs for PRN psychoactive medications," Yackel adds.

While the staff is currently offering the system as a portable machine, it hopes to implement the sensory experience in an entire room soon.

For more information about Snoezelen, go to www.isna.de/ and click on the English version of the Web site. An article at www.sohp.soton.ac.uk/neuro/SNOEZ.htm also explains the concept and use of the therapy for elderly people with confusion.

Foster Community Relationships

Improving residents' sense of connection and involvement in the facility and community also reduces depression and behavioral symptoms. Baldomero Lopez has arranged for high school students to do their required volunteer service there to develop relationships with individual residents.

"We have seen [positive] changes in residents' behaviors resulting from that type of one-on-one attention and interaction," says **Susan Poynter**, activities director for the facility.