

HORTICULTURE THERAPY (HT) FOR RESIDENTS WITH DEMENTIA IN A NURSING HOME: A PILOT STUDY

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OBJECTIVES : This paper reports the effects of HT on nursing home residents with dementia and discusses issues related to the development of an evidence-based protocol in HT.

METHODS : The setting is a nursing home in Hong Kong. The HT program consists of a 60-minute session weekly for 6 weeks, with 6 participants in the group. The program is conducted by an internist (learning to become a registered HT therapist) supervised by a registered horticulture therapist. Each session is followed by a 15-minute sharing and discussion period. A non-participant observer audio-records the entire session and all sessions are transcribed verbatim. The transcripts will be independently coded by two of the researchers, who then will compare the categories generated and discuss their interpretations. Through discussions and clarifications, an agreed coding framework will be developed and used to code each transcript. Common themes will be identified from the categories, noting the temporal development of the group's responses over time.

RESULTS : At the time of this paper, the HT program is still ongoing. The preliminary data from the first 3 sessions shows that there may be some positive effects of HT on the participants. However, some negative effects are also noted.

CONCLUSIONS : Only positive effects of HT have been reported in the literature. What is found in this study will be useful to inform healthcare providers interested in HT and remind them to be more cognizant of some likely issues when conducting HT programs, in order to prevent them from occurring or to make provisions for addressing them, e.g., counseling for the participant who becomes upset when a plant dies. The researchers have also become aware of various issues that need to be taken into consideration when devising HT programs, and will share them during the presentation.

Keywords : horticulture therapy, gardening, dementia