

Community Needs Driven Research Network

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Need for Rehabilitation and Recreation Staff

Across the province, front-line staff said more research was needed to document and identify the benefits and effects of rehabilitation and recreation services and interventions for continuing care (CC) clients. Participants reported that clients, families, and front-line staff see the benefits of these interventions, but there is little research available to support these claims. The lack of research makes it hard for providers to explain hiring more rehabilitation and recreation professionals. Participants reported that engagement in therapeutic and recreational interventions and programs raise motivation, independence, functional capacity, and quality of life. Also, it seems to lower the need for certain types of medications and lessens challenging behaviours. Participants knew there was research on this topic, but pointed out that it was often international and therefore not culturally or contextually relevant. This international research was often done for a specific site, so did not match the characteristics of rural and urban sites, making it non-generalizable.

What did front-line workers say?

· “I think another great research project might be to look at the effect, both within the dementia population and within the cognitively intact population, of the effects of a substantial well-run therapeutic and leisure activity programs within the sites and its effect on antipsychotic and antidepressant use. Because I think sometimes people are depressed because they are bored and haven’t got anything else to do.”

· “...we need to look at what effect rehab has not only on their progress or their maintenance of independent function, but also in their mental affect and their perception of quality of life. I think those are huge areas because those are areas that are much underfunded.”

· “...and it seems that doing things to maintain a quality of life is not an extra; it should be just as important as the physical care that we give but how do we get to the point where that IS considered just another normal part of the service that we provide?”



What is being done about this issue?

At the request of Alberta Health, the Institute for Continuing Care Education and Research (ICCR) put together a research team of interested professionals and submitted a proposal to further look at the effects of recreation on quality of life for those in continuing care. The team submitted a grant on October 31, 2013 to Alberta Health and it was approved in January 2014. The principal investigator (PI) on the project is Dr. Gordon Walker of the University of Alberta. The study is focusing on the link between the frequency, duration, and nature of recreation activities and the quality of life of those in long-term care facilities and supportive living. Results will be available September 2015.



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