

0405

## Does occupational therapy intervention for older people with dementia in residential and nursing homes improve quality of life? A cluster randomised controlled trial

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**Introduction:** Inactivity in residential and nursing homes reduces residents' quality of life. A contributory factor is caregivers' lack of knowledge and skills in activity provision.

**Objective:** To evaluate the effectiveness of occupational therapy to enable staff to provide appropriate activities, and thereby improve quality of life for residents with dementia.

**Method:** Cluster randomised controlled trial: matched pair design, within 16 homes across London, UK. Eight homes (n = 104 residents) received the intervention, and eight (n = 106 residents) continued providing usual care. The intervention, provided by an experienced occupational therapist, comprised: environmental assessment; education sessions and individual coaching with staff, who implemented tools for enhancing activity provision with two residents each. Primary outcome measure: Quality of Life in Alzheimer's Disease (QOL-AD). Secondary outcome measures: dependency (CAPE-BRS), challenging behaviour (CBS), depression (CSDD), anxiety (RAID), severity of dementia (CDR) and medication. Measures completed at baseline, 4, and 12 weeks post intervention. Those assessing outcomes were blinded to allocation and intervention content.

**Results:** 210 residents with dementia, mean age 84.2 (60 - 101). Forty residents died. Numbers analysed on an intention to treat basis for QOL-AD: 165 and 159 at first and second follow-up respectively. Quality of life, dependency, challenging behaviour measures deteriorated; whilst severity of depression and anxiety reduced for both groups. Multi level modelling to account for the clustering effect, and adjusted for baseline, found no significant differences between the intervention and control groups.

### Conclusion and implications for occupational therapy:

The intervention was not effective in improving quality of life as measured with QOL-AD, but severity of depression and anxiety reduced across both groups; suggesting a beneficial effect arising from the baseline occupational therapy assessment. Whilst allocated homes received the intervention, staff attendance and adherence to the programme varied, so how many residents actually received significantly enhanced activity provision is not known. However, homes with strong management commitment reported enhanced quality of life for residents. Future studies should consider alternative implementation and programme fidelity strategies, and more sensitive outcome measures to fully capture the potential impact of occupational therapy.

Trial registration: [www.controlled-trials.com](http://www.controlled-trials.com); Identifier: ISRCTN67952488