



Developing an educational dvd on the use of hand massage in the care of people with dementia: An innovation



Dympna Tuohy^{a,*}, Margaret M. Graham^{a,1}, Kevin Johnson^{a,2}, Teresa Tuohy^{b,3},
Kath Burke^{c,4}

^a Nursing and Midwifery, University of Limerick, Ireland

^b Mental Health Older Adult, Health Service Executive, Limerick, Ireland

^c Medical Day Hospital, St Camillus' Hospital, Limerick, Ireland

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ABSTRACT

The world's population is ageing and while the vast majority of older people live independently, a significant number will develop dementia. Communication and interpersonal skills are essential in developing relationships. People with dementia may have complex health needs and may have limited language capacity and therefore the use of presence and touch and more specifically hand massage gains greater significance for their wellbeing.

This paper describes the process of developing an educational dvd on the use of hand massage in the care of people with dementia which is easily accessible via the web. A description of the design and project management including post production editing is provided. A number of outcomes are identified including: dvd launch, development of local and national interest, facilitation of workshops and the securing of funding for research. The educational dvd is a resource for learning for health care professionals and members of the public. The initiative offers a way of using technology to support individuals, nurses, carers and families living with dementia. This project demonstrates collaboration and connection between practice, education and technology and highlights the importance of the cyclical nature of theory and practice in responding to health care needs of a community.

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Introduction

One of the purposes of education in nursing is to facilitate life-long learning. It is acknowledged that both nurses and carers play an integral part in caring for individuals with dementia. Traditional approaches of education have evolved to incorporate multi-media technology. This increased accessibility is capitalised upon aiming to connect with nurses and carers to share knowledge and information through an educational dvd. This paper describes the process of developing an educational dvd on the use of hand massage

in the care of people with dementia which is easily accessible via the web.

Background

Dementia

The world's population is ageing, particularly so in the western world. Within Ireland, over 11.6% of the total population is aged 65 years and over and this figure is set to rise considerably (Central Statistics Office, 2011). While the vast majority of older people live independently, a number will develop dementia, it is estimated that there are currently over 41,700 people in Ireland with dementia (Cahill et al., 2012) and 35.6 million people worldwide (Waite, 2012). Dementia may be defined as a progressive degenerative disease affecting cognitive function and occurring over a number of years. Symptoms include memory loss, changes in mood, communication and reasoning problems (Waite, 2012). People with dementia are cared for by family carers, nurses and the

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +353 61 234213.

E-mail addresses: dympna.tuohy@ul.ie (D. Tuohy), margaret.graham@ul.ie (M.M. Graham), kevin.johnson@ul.ie (K. Johnson), ttuohy@tcd.ie (T. Tuohy), Kathleen.burke@hse.ie (K. Burke).

¹ Tel.: +353 61 234217.

² Tel.: +353 61 213350.

³ Tel.: +353 61 483 777.

⁴ Tel.: +353 61 483651.

broader multidisciplinary health care team and may be cared for in a variety of settings such as hospitals, residential continuing care units and/or in the community in their own homes.

People with dementia may find their world to be a very changed and unfamiliar place, leading to emotional distress (de Vries, 2013). Many communication strategies including hand massage have been identified to ease distress and promote emotional comfort (de Vries, 2013; Goldschmidt and van Meines, 2012). Therefore, learning to use touch as a communication strategy for individuals whose ability to communicate is compromised may be a valuable way of expressing kindness and compassion.

Hand massage

Touch is one of the first senses to develop according to Montague (1978) and is a fundamental human need (Bush, 2001). Doherty et al. (2006) suggest that the concepts of healing and touch are interwoven. Specifically, hands have been described as a natural choice as an individualised form of communication (Goldschmidt and van Meines, 2012). Furthermore, Harris and Richards (2010) argue that hand massage can be a process for reducing physiological and psychological stress in older people. Therapeutic touch aims to facilitate healing and build and maintain communication with people suffering from dementia (Meehan, 1998). Short periods of calming comforting touch for as little as three minutes can reduce anxiety (Goldschmidt and van Meines, 2012). Touching hands, in this way, may be an indicator of caring touch focusing on the hands and adding light massage strokes. Bush (2001) suggests that touching through hand massage has many benefits. It promotes calmness, relaxation, sleep and comfort; it can help relieve anxiety, stress and agitation and connects nurse/carer and person. Older people with dementia may experience many of these symptoms and struggle with many losses, including the ability to communicate and struggle to 'maintain a sense of relationship' (McCarthy, 2011 p. 11). Such a struggle may lead to frustration and tension for both the individual and carers. Several interrelated elements need to be considered prior to and during the use of hand massage as a therapeutic intervention. Central to the nurse-patient relationship is a willingness to focus on the needs of the patient. This is underpinned by the therapeutic use of self, drawing upon attributes such as empathy, authenticity, presence and self-awareness (Arnold, 2011). Presence seeks to connect both emotionally and physically while providing hand massage for an individual who is anxious or distressed. However to meaningfully engage in this therapeutic process, it is essential that the nurse be able to "tune in" to their feelings and attitudes to hand massage through enhanced self-awareness. Taking a moment to pause, prepare and respond to the patient in distress/need, is central to the provision of hand massage. Given the nature of an increasing busy work environment, self-awareness, knowing the patient through person centred care and effective team communication are critical in providing hand massage.

In essence, it is important to be aware of how each individual responds to a hand massage. Constant awareness of when to initiate, to continue and discontinue the activity is critical in promoting person centred choice. Therefore in accordance with ethical practice, patient consent is critical in the provision of hand massage particularly so when caring for vulnerable groups.

When deciding to offer hand massage, timing and individual assessment is essential. The nurse/carer considers the patient's individual verbal and nonverbal responses as well as underlying physical conditions such as pain, immobility, skin conditions and their normal routine.

While there may be an interest and willingness for nurses and carers to provide hand massage, this can be impeded by a lack of or

limited knowledge and/or confidence on the use of hand massage. In acknowledgement of this, an educational dvd was developed to provide information on hand massage and to demonstrate the skills of hand massage.

Learning to learn

People learn in many different ways, they learn through listening, seeing, doing, thinking and reflecting on experiences. There are numerous learning theories which try to explain these processes including behavioural, social, motivational, adult and cognitive learning theories (Hughes and Quinn, 2013). The concept and development of the educational dvd on hand massage was informed by such theories. Cognitive learning theorists such as Ausubel and Brunner explained different ways in which people learn including rote and discovery learning (Hughes and Quinn, 2013) This process is facilitated through the dvd's explanation of "the what, why and how" of hand massage and its use in alleviating anxiety for people with dementia. Furthermore it provides opportunities for users to acquire and apply new information and evaluate the use of hand massage (Hughes and Quinn, 2013).

The dvd details the stages of hand massage through a practical demonstration as well as a series of still photographs of each hand movement which draws upon social learning theory through its emphasis on skills acquisition and development through learning by modelling. Underpinning the development of this education dvd were adult learning theories (Hughes and Quinn, 2013) of which experiential learning, andragogy and humanistic approaches are core concepts. The facilitatory approach to teaching and learning with its emphasis on learner empowerment and experiential learning (Bailey and Tuohy, 2009) underpinned the development of this education dvd.

The use of three inter related elements within the dvd namely the written text; still photographs and the video of the hand massage enable learners to plan and pace their own learning according to their needs. Therefore, it was considered useful to draw from and apply aspects of various learning and teaching theories and approaches to ensure a learner centred focus so that nurses and other carers would become interested in learning about hand massage. This interest would then motivate them to develop and practice their hand massage skills for the benefit of those they care for.

Developing the programme

Origins of the programme and the design team

The development of the educational dvd originated in a mutual interest in the care of the older person and a desire to develop an easily accessible resource which could be used by registered and student nurses, health care assistants and lay people caring for individuals with dementia in a range of settings (including home, community, acute and residential units). The design team was formulated from nurses working and teaching in care of the older person and also included a senior audio-visual technician (Box: 1).

Project management

We agreed working arrangements, terms of reference, membership and deadlines. The team worked in collaboration, numerous face to face meetings were held as well as email discussions of the content drafts. It must be acknowledged that the initial time allocated to this project underestimated the actual time required from planning to programme development to editing to roll out. The project, from initial idea to launch, took ten months

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