Dementia care and ageing education

With an increasing population being diagnosed with dementia (Alzheimer’s Society, 2014), a robust programme on dementia care has been embedded into the pre-registration nursing curriculum, reflecting the national dementia training framework (Skills for Health, Health Education England and Skills for Care, 2015).

An integral part of the students’ second year learning experience is to examine the ageing process and how it differs from dementia. The students undertake various tasks whilst wearing specially designed suits that simulate the ageing process, creating a practical insight into how people have to live with various physical impairments and how this may impact on the overall well-being of that person.

The students then reflect on how this experience may influence the way they carryout their nursing practice in the future.

Feedback and commitment to change in practice

Gert suits provided more of an insight about the perspective of a patient and the carer

I will remember the vulnerability I felt in a familiar place, therefore in an unfamiliar environment the vulnerable feeling must be worse. I shall do everything I can to reduce this.

Have more appreciation of how much effort and how much time people need to do simple tasks

I will make a more conscious effort to think about my positioning when communicating with older patients

Good to experience how others see and cope with old age

Very informative and thought provoking

Gaining an insight into what it is like, enabling more empathy in practice

Really enjoyed the experience of wearing the suit, feel I will take a lot of what I learnt into practice

Experience made it more realistic how difficult it is to do very simple things like walking, communicating

I think everybody within the healthcare industry should wear these as they really do put being ‘elderly’ into perspective

Good to experience the psychological aspect

Gave opportunity to build on theory learnt on Dementia Day

Allowing service users more time to become orientated to the environment

Speak louder and clearer

Take more time when mobilising and interacting with patients

Being patient with patients

Shared local and national initiatives

Our GERT suits have been loaned to East of England Co-op for training staff, in their bid to become recognised as a dementia friendly retailer. This training programme is part of a wider campaign by the Dementia Action Alliance (DAA) to create a national response to improve the lives of people and families living with dementia.


Recommendations to improve experience of GERT suits

- Train more facilitators to use the suits
- Utilise suits in other clinical skills sessions from 1st year
- Involve service users, families or carers to enhance the learning experience
- Explore the possibility of students and staff from other programmes to use the suits

The GERontologic Test suit (GERT)

Simulated impairments:

- age-related eye diseases
- narrowing of the visual field
- hearing loss
- head mobility restrictions
- joint stiffness
- reduced strength
- reduced grip ability
- reduced coordination skills

References and websites


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