Reconnecting Veiled Minds Through Music: A Volunteer Experience Evaluation

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Problem

• 46.8 million people living with dementia, this number continually on the rise.
• Pharmacological interventions routinely used as an attempt to help slow the process of dementia and improve the quality of life of those affected.
  • Proves to be very costly and comes with adverse effects.
• Music is an effective, low cost alternative with no side effects.
  • Volunteers are needed to implement the Music & Memory program.

Results

• Out of the 14 who received training, five signed up for volunteer shifts.
• Quotes from surveys:
  • “[I enjoyed] getting to connect with the resident on a personal level, hear about her life and do my best to help with her problems.”
  • “I am a pre-nursing student with a desire to work in geriatrics so this volunteer experience was great!”
  • “Need more training sessions. To my knowledge there was only one available and I had class at that time so I didn’t feel educated enough to volunteer.”

Implications for Future Volunteer Training and Engaging Process

• Next time, I would try to do more recruiting earlier in the semester, in anticipation that not all of the trained volunteers will sign up for volunteer shifts.
• I would train the volunteers after spring break instead of before, as some of the information given at training was forgotten too quickly.
• I would also ensure ahead of time that ALL of the staff was familiar with the Music & Memory program at the facility, instead of just the activities director.
• Utilize the Music & Memory Community website earlier in the process.
• Continue to use Dementia Friendly training method and tour of facility.

Background

Music and Memory Inc., a non-profit organization, has created a successful non-pharmacological intervention for nursing home residents with cognitive impairments that requires an iPod shuffle, headphones and an individualized music playlist for each resident. It requires staff training and volunteer training and is used throughout the world to improve the quality of life for nursing home residents.

Design and Method

• Volunteers trained to be Dementia Friendly
  • PowerPoint presentation
  • Oriented to the facility (Allendale Nursing & Rehabilitation).
  • Filled out a volunteer packet required by Allendale Nursing.
  • Volunteers signed up for shifts through a link that was emailed to them.
  • Shifts were one hour long, as the residents have low attention spans and tire easily.
• During time spent at the facility, volunteers distributed iPods and headphones to residents, listened to music with them, and recorded their findings.
• At the end of the experience, volunteers were given a survey to determine the effectiveness of and satisfaction with the volunteer experience/training

Sample

A total of 14 volunteers were trained. Out of those trained five volunteered and four returned completed surveys to me. Volunteers were all GVSU students, being KCON nursing students or Sigma Kappa sorority members.