‘Finding a way in’: connecting with people living with advanced dementia in care homes

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Come and visit us
Overview of presentation

– The problem
– Aims
– Methods
– Findings
The problem: Social Isolation
What research tells us about social isolation

• Residents spend their days alone, with little interaction with anyone (Ice. 2002, Clare, 2010).

• Residents are often only approached at meal times or for personal care (Barwick, 2014; Boyd et al, 2012).

• Care homes do not offer enough chances for residents to get involved in meaningful activities (Barwick, 2014; Clare, 2010).
What research tells us about how we can connect

– Turn taking (Astell and Ellis, 2006).
– Elder Clowns (Kontos et al, 2015)
– Dolls (Braden and Gaspar, 2015)
– Stimulation of senses
  (Sanchez et al, 2015, Sposito et al, 2015)
Study aims

Gain a care home staff perspective on:

1. Ways they connect with residents living with advanced dementia
2. What supports connections
3. What prevents connections
Method

• Semi structured interviews
  – 18 care home staff
  – 4 relatives of residents with advanced dementia

• Data analysis
  – Common themes & patterns
Findings: ways staff connect

• Informally, usually during personal care
  – Eye contact
  – Soft tone
  – Being close to the resident
  – Touch (holding hands, massage)
  – Singing, music, humour
Findings: what supports & prevents connections

**Residents**
- In the mood
- Feel alert
- Know staff member
- Are in good health

**Calm, Quiet, Peaceful**

**Staff**
- Knowledge of dementia
- Positive attitude
- Caring attributes
- Know the residents
- Observe reactions
- Vehicles

**Leadership**
- Care home culture (permission)
- Support

**Role Conflict**
- Time/Flexibility
- Competing priorities

Connecting with people living with advanced dementia in care homes
Conclusion: gap between research and practice

- Staff connections are spontaneous and informal, not organised and structured as in the literature

- These connections resonate with the principles that underpin the research evidence

- A range of factors support or prevent connections

- When all factors are aligned connections are more likely to occur
Recommendations

• A systems approach is required to address/align these factors in order encourage meaningful connections.
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