A Sensory Garden to enhance Occupational Performance and Quality of Life

Frances Campbell
Advanced Recreation Officer
• “Sensory Room” is an umbrella term used to categorize a broad variety of therapeutic spaces specifically designed and utilized to promote self-organization and positive change.
Introduction

- Carrara Health Centre is a sub-acute setting.
- 31 Beds designated GEMM unit.
- Various stages of dementia/cognitive decline.
- Long length of stay.
- Existing outdoor areas were not safe or therapeutic.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Possible Score</th>
<th>Actual Score</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Size</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual Access</td>
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Evidence Supports Outdoor Areas for Dementia Care

- ↓ B.P.S.D behaviours
- ↓ use of physical and/or chemical restraints
- Facilitate independence
- Positive self image and socialisation
- ↑ sleep wake cycle due to sun exposure
- ↑ Quality of life
- ↓ Falls
Core Therapeutic Elements for Sensory Garden

“Functional design to encourage participation”

- Sensory Stimulation
- Occupational Performance
- Cultural Elements / Reminiscence
- Safe outdoor area to mobilise
- Therapeutic area
- Encourage self exploration
- Mirror leisure environment
Challenges

- Multiple changes of centre management
- Engineering reviews (water drainage)
- Existing structure
- Cost & funding
  - No fixed hard scape elements (structural weight)
  - No access to original building plans (no drilling for water pipes)
- Temperature control
Sensory Garden.....almost done!
A productive garden

Herbs

Vegetables
Other Features
Outcomes of Sensory Garden

- Spontaneous use of garden features by many patients on a daily basis
- Improved attendance in recreation groups held in the Sensory Garden
- A significant therapeutic tool to aid in the management of patients with BPSD
- Overwhelming positive feedback from patients regarding the presence of the garden
- Improved score on EAT (Environmental Audit Tool) by 15%
- Among the patients who utilized the sensory garden during group or individual sessions, most report having had a positive response and a decrease in perceptions of distress.
## Audit Tool Results Post Sensory Garden 2011

### Summary of Scores

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Case study: Mrs. M

- 78 y.o. Female – Frontal Lobe Dementia
- B.P.S.D. present
- **Medical Management:**
  - Medication, 15 min Obs, Behaviour chart, Wanderers alarm
- **Initial Occupational Therapy Intervention:**
  - Room change to encourage independent access
  - Orientation and redirection to the sensory garden
  - Hobbies / Interest Profile
  - Recreational groups in garden
Case Study: continued

• Sensory Garden Participation:
  – Daily spontaneous use of area

• Outcome:
  – ↓ aggression, paranoia, hostility, wandering
  – Removed wanderer’s alarm
  – Reduced need for staff supervision
  – ↓ Medication
  – ↑ Independence with ADL
  – OT able to complete formal Ax
  – Patient able to engage in discharge planning
Patient Comments

“Would have spend more time in my room” if the sensory garden was not there, and that “it’s home-like”.

“In here we are institutionalised in a friendly way of course, but in the garden we’re free” and “helps long-term patients ease their minds in an outside setting”.

“It’s relaxing, peaceful and it’s great to get outside.”

“It’s colourful and I love the raised garden beds.”

“It’s lovely to sit in the garden to do some sketching and write poetry, very relaxing and takes your mind off other things”
The word “seize” is used to remind us that the future is ours to create but it requires us, both individually and collectively, to actively pursue that outcome rather than expecting it to come to us.
Contact us:

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LIFE ISN'T ABOUT WAITING FOR THE STORM TO PASS, IT'S ABOUT LEARNING TO DANCE IN THE RAIN