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Success Story

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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEMORY MAGIC PROJECT

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We hope these experiences will enlighten and motivate individuals in all types of health care organisations.

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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEMORY MAGIC PROJECT

Anglican Care is an aged care provider operating throughout the Hunter and Central Coast regions in NSW. The organisation operates seven residential aged care facilities, together with community based services.

Anglican Care's Success Story centers around the identification and implementation of a unique therapeutic activity, Memory Magic™, into the Lifestyle and Wellbeing programs provided to their frail elderly and dementia residents.

A number of issues were identified via Anglican Care's Residential Care Services that prompted the organisation to source and implement additional activities. These included:

- Feedback from residents' family members as to the difficulty in communicating with their loved ones suffering from a dementia related illness.
- Communication from staff as to the need for additional activities that would increase social interaction and alleviate boredom in residents.
- Anglican Care's quality improvement program wherein the need was identified to ensure that residents within dementia specific units had access to meaningful activities as per individual needs.
- Results from the 2009 Press Ganey Satisfaction Survey wherein 'Variety of Activities' was included as one of the Top 10 Priorities for Quality Improvement.

A literature search was undertaken by Anglican Care's Lifestyle & Wellbeing Co-ordinator, in conjunction with staff in the Clinical Practice Unit. In identifying a suitable program, it was Anglican Care's goal to find a program that met the principles of the Habilitation-based Model of Care, the principles of which are being incorporated into Anglican Care's education and care models. This Model optimises function, minimises stress, promotes positive emotions and maximises success, in people suffering from dementia related illnesses.

The Memory Magic™ program was identified as meeting these principles. Designed in America by Creative Action LLC, the American Research demonstrated the following outcomes for residents using Memory Magic™:

- Significantly more engagement
- Significantly more positive social behaviours and interactions
- Number of negative behaviours remained the same (but in US National Institutes of Health and US National Institute of Aging research was significantly lower for Memory Magic™ vs. residents not using the program)

Following identification, a trial was held over a one month period and feedback collated from residents, staff, volunteers and family members. Feedback was extremely positive.

Discussions were held via the established meeting structures of Residential Care Services, with a decision being made at a senior level to purchase and implement the program.

A project team was established to oversee implementation, with Anglican Care's Executive Director of Residential Care Services as the Project Sponsor. The team utilised Anglican Care's Project Management Tools which have been specifically tailored to the needs of the organisation and based on the internationally accepted Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK). The tools included training and communication methods.

Anglican Care's Lifestyle & Wellbeing Co-ordinator received training from representatives of Creative Action LLC via webinar and was also able to utilise training DVD's contained on their website. Training was then provided to Anglican Care's Lifestyle staff, with a Memory Magic 'Champion' being identified at each facility. It is essential to stress to staff that Memory Magic™ is not just a 'game' but a therapeutic activity.

The Memory Magic™ program is a unique therapeutic activity that combines general knowledge with reminiscence. Based on Montessori principles, the program was developed to provide an interesting and entertaining activity for people with cognitive difficulties. The objectives of the Memory Magic™ program are as follows:

- Promote the use of cognitive abilities and motor skills
- Stimulate social interaction
- Increase levels of engagement
- Increase positive emotions
- Reduce behavioural disturbances
- Create an enjoyable failure-free experience.

The program consists of 10 game boards (each with 9 moveable shades), 4 double-sided game cards and 240 double-sided calling cards. The calling cards providing talking points and cues to assist Lifestyle and Wellbeing staff to lead discussions amongst residents.

Anglican Care is the first aged care provider in Australia to purchase and implement Memory Magic™ into their lifestyle and wellbeing programs. The activity itself is innovative and creative in that participants are able to utilise long lasting abilities such as reading, habits and skills from the past, reminiscing and interacting with each other in a structured and supported social setting.

To enable Anglican Care to fully evaluate the benefits of the program on their residents, they established a relationship with Swinburne and Monash Universities, who carried out an evaluation of the program pre and post implementation.

The study addressed the elements detailed below:

- (1) To determine the degree of resident engagement (verbal and nonverbal social interaction) whilst participating in the Memory Magic™ program.
- (2) To implement the use of the Memory Magic™ program in an attempt to increase the longevity of cognitive and emotional abilities of dementia residents while reducing certain behaviours characteristic of this illness.

The evaluation commenced on 29 March 2010 and ran for 12 weeks. The research involved specific groups of Anglican Care's residents participating in Memory Magic™ and other existing activities, for periods of one hour, two times per week. Residents were observed during these sessions and information on the residents involved in the research collated pre and post implementation.

Residents were videotaped during some sessions of Memory Magic™ and information on behaviours collected. A clinical measure of mental and cognitive health was administered to participating residents.

Although the formal results of the research are not yet available, observations from Anglican Care's staff show significantly more interaction between residents participating in the Memory Magic™ program as opposed to those residents involved in other similar activities. Anglican Care has also received positive feedback from staff and residents via their feedback systems as outlined below:

- *Manager and staff commented that residents responded well to activity and actively participated. One resident that cannot sit due to agitation, sat through the whole game and worked as a team.*
- *Thought it was interesting – enjoyable.*
- *Really fun – we loved it.*
- *Game was great, with lots of possibilities. Residents loved the activity and it's easy to set up.*
- *Excellent – the game is very interesting.*
- *A resident of Fred Lean Hostel thought Memory Magic was a great game. Even though the resident was unable to see the board she was still able to participate by answering questions and looks forward to playing again.*
- *We liked the interchangeable cards with white or black backgrounds.*
- *Easy to play, well explained. I enjoyed playing.*

Additionally, since the implementation, Anglican Care's staff across all sites have reported a number of interactions where residents have shared stories of their past memories. Not previously known, these stories have resulted in greater understanding and empathy between fellow residents and staff members. Some residents have advised feeling sick or sad at the start of sessions, but by the end of the session they were laughing and felt better.

In addition to the outcome of the research, results of the implementation will continue to be monitored via feedback mechanisms, quality improvement programs, staff climate surveys and Press Ganey Satisfaction Surveys.

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