

Dancing through Dementia

Implementing Wu Tao dance therapy in dementia spaces

Dementia is a broad term for a syndrome that includes memory, language and behaviour difficulties that lead to impairments in the activities of daily living (BMJ 2015). Dementia affects almost 50 million people worldwide. There are an estimated 425,416 Australians living with dementia in 2018, with an estimated cost of more than \$15 billion, predicted to increase to more than \$18.7 billion by 2025. Targeted programs and services that focus on the social, emotional, physical, and health needs of the person with dementia as well as their carers and family members, can lessen the burden and reduce dementia-related costs across the broader health and aged care sector (Alzheimer's Australia 2017).

Why Dance?

- Dance is a powerful form of non verbal self expression that fosters social connection, pleasure and well-being (Hamill, Smith & Röhrich 2011).
- Creative expression is important for everyone, but even more so for people with dementia for whom other avenues of self-expression are often severely limited (Hamill, Smith & Röhrich 2011).
- Expression through movement can reinforce a sense of self for a person losing cognitive and intellectual functions, because body movements are not dependent upon cognition (Hamson & Morris 2016).
- Through dance, people are challenged to simultaneously listen to music, follow directions and maintain balance while moving their bodies, tasks shown to slow down cognitive decline in older adults (Hwang & Braun 2015).
- The benefits of dance therapy for those with dementia have been well documented, however it's implementation into dementia spaces has been limited due to funding restrictions and lack of information for stakeholders.



Wu Tao Dance Therapy

Wu Tao is a therapeutic dance modality developed by Michelle Locke RN which combines melodic music with flowing movements. The dances are based on the elements of nature and the Traditional Chinese Medicine system of Qi. They stimulate energy flow through a network of pathways known as meridians and are easily adapted for people with mobility and cognitive impairments.

Initial research has shown Wu Tao can improve quality of life and reduce agitation for people with dementia (Duignan, Hedley & Milverton 2009)

Implementation within Dementia Spaces

Dance therapy can be easily implemented with a trained provider, music delivery system and suitable environment (Albanese et al., 2007). Wu Tao International and Give Life a Dance Inc provide trained instructors and professional education to meet these requirements. For information contact Michelle Locke @ mlocke@wutaodance.com +(61) 417 989 397

