

Dementia Communication and Care Training Program

BACKGROUND

Dementia affects millions of individuals worldwide. It significantly impacts communication and executive functioning, which can impact behavior and participation in daily life. As prevalence increases in residential care settings, care partners often lack training in effective communication and non-pharmacological care strategies to support quality of life.

Literature Review:

- Dementia is a progressive neurological condition that impacts cognition, communication, behavior, and occupational participation (NIA, 2023).
- Cognitive impairment is common in residential care settings, affecting approximately 21% of individuals in independent living and up to 57% in assisted living, with a substantial proportion diagnosed with dementia (American SHA & ATI Advisor, 2023)
- Fragmented care coordination further limits occupational engagement and quality of life (Kern et al., 2024; Hoek et al., 2020)
- Communication difficulties are a primary contributor to agitation, withdrawal, and behavioral challenges for individuals with dementia and their caregivers (Morris, Mansell, et al., 2018; Savundranayagam & Lee, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2022).
- Person-centered dementia education improves care partner confidence, supports occupational engagement, and reduces behavioral distress (Morris, Horne, et al., 2018; Warren, 2021; Hockley et al., 2023; Stanyon et al., 2016)

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Dementia Care Competency Framework	
Competency Domains:	
Dementia Knowledge	Enriching Lives
Person Centered Care	End of Life Dementia Care
Care Interaction	Care for Self and Caregivers
Behaviors of Concern	Capability Building (Elective)

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal Statement: Develop and implement a training program that equips care partners of individuals with dementia using evidence-based strategies to improve understanding of dementia and related behavioral expressions by reframing behavior as a form of communication and introducing care strategies to improve interactions.

Objectives:

- Complete a needs assessment to identify specific needs and preferences among the EmpowerMe communities.
- Create and implement a dementia communication and care educational program tailored to all care partners of individuals with dementia.
- Deliver training to at least two EmpowerMe facilities and assess improvements using confidence surveys and a knowledge quiz.
- Demonstrate at least a 75% increase in reported confidence and achieve an average score of 80% or higher on the post-education knowledge quiz.
- Establish a sustainability plan to integrate training into ongoing facility practice.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Training was informed by:

- Needs assessment data
- Evidence-Based dementia care literature
- Ongoing mentor, staff, and peer feedback

The ***Dementia Communication and Care Training Program*** was implemented within three EmpowerMe Wellness communities serving ILF, ALF, and memory care settings. The training addressed key topics such as:

- Dementia Background and Statistics
- Behavioral and Psychological Symptoms in Dementia
 - Motor, Verbal, Cognitive, Emotional, Biological
- Understanding behavior as a form of communication
- Communication Strategies
- Non-Pharmacological Care Strategies
- Agitation vs Aggression
- De-Escalation Strategies

A comprehensive **dementia care resource document** was developed to support continued learning and sustainability. Content includes:

- Recorded voice-over of the training presentation
- Additional educational resources
- Caregiver support and education
- Memory care product resources
- ADL and IADL management
- Environmental modifications

Laminated resource cards with a QR code linking directly to the resource document were distributed across participating communities.



Scan to see resource document

EVALUATION METHODS

Quantitative Measures

- Pre and Post Training Confidence Surveys (6 Questions)*
 - Use of Likert Scale*
 - Examples of Questions:*
 - I can identify 5 unmet needs that may trigger behavioral expressions.
 - I can describe how my tone, body language, and personal space can influence behavior.
- Post Training Knowledge Quiz (10 Questions)*
 - Examples of Questions:*
 - Which of the following are behavioral expressions in a person with dementia? (Multiple Choice)
 - Which communication strategy is most appropriate when supporting a person with dementia? (Multiple Choice)
 - Poor lighting and loud noise are examples of environmental triggers that may increase behavioral expressions. (True or False)

Qualitative Measures

- Open Ended Survey Responses
- Weekly mentor feedback throughout implementation

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Capstone Mentor: Michelle Anderson, OTR/L

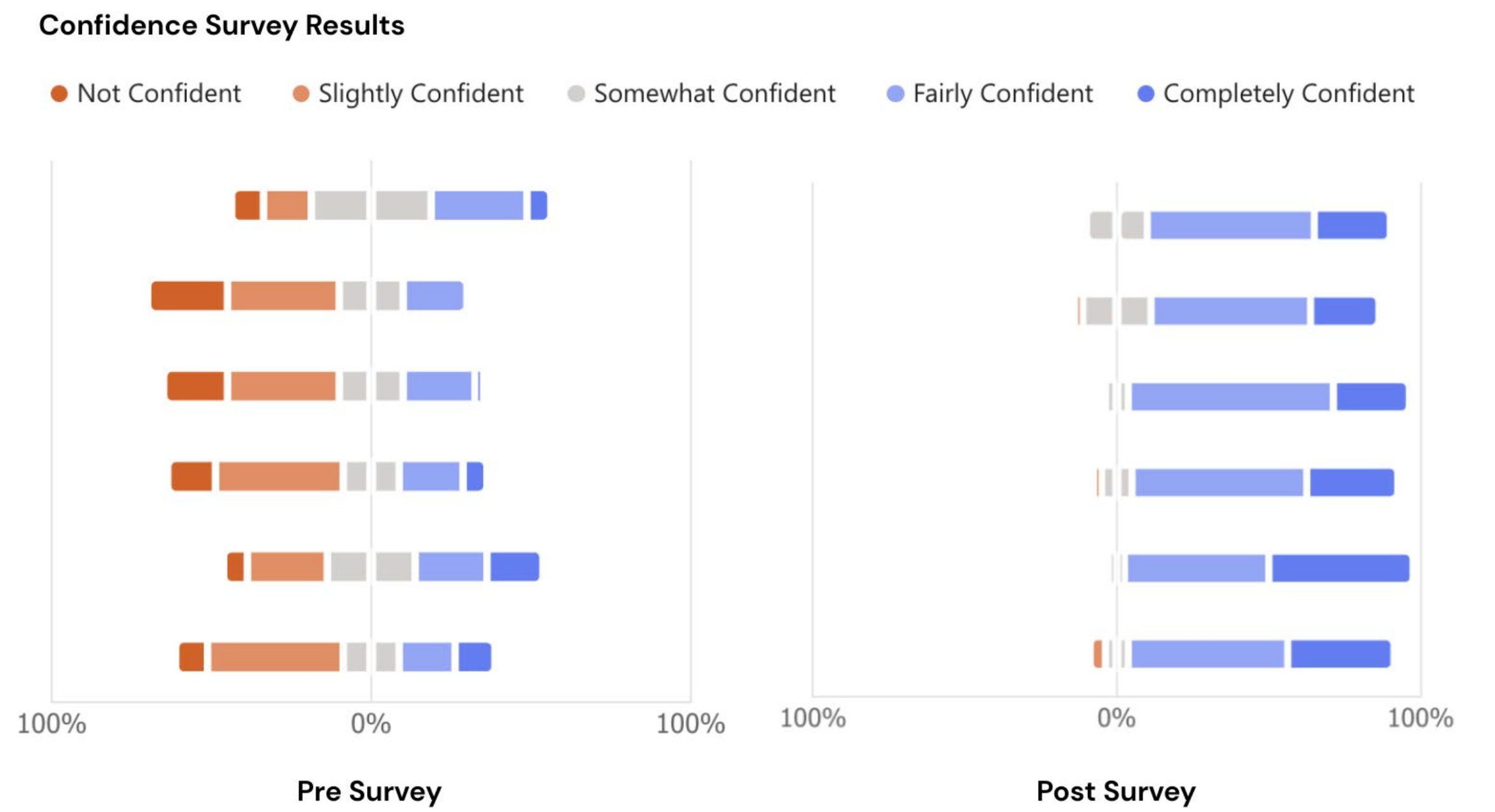
Faculty Mentor: Kara Alcorn-Borodach, OTD, OTR/L

Capstone Coordinator: Julie Silver Seidle, PhD, OTR/L

OUTCOMES

Survey and quiz results demonstrated **improved knowledge and confidence following training participation** with an average confidence increase of 53% and a average knowledge score of 8.7/10.

Qualitative feedback indicated the training was practical, relevant, and applicable to daily interactions. Some participants expressed that sessions felt rushed with a desire for longer sessions to allow for deeper discussion.



CONCLUSION

Impact:

Direct:

- Increased care partner confidence and knowledge in dementia communication and care strategies
- Quick access to resource document for ongoing support during daily care interactions

Indirect:

- Promotes more consistent, person-centered care across residential communities, increasing QoL for residents living with dementia
- Shared understanding among all care partners enhances overall care environment

Occupational Performance

- Improved communication and care strategies support participation in daily tasks, social interaction, and meaningful activities

Future Directions:

- Expand program into longer or multi-session formats to allow for deeper learning and further improve participant confidence and understanding
 - Current program provides foundation for continued refinement and expansion

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