

## **BENEFITS OF TOUCHSCREEN USE FOR THE ELDERLY AND THOSE WITH DEMENTIA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The advantages of keeping the elderly and those with dementia engaged through use of touch screens has been found to include being more engaged and less reliant on medication and prescription drugs. Higher levels of engagement lead to less likelihood of falling, and brain activity is maintained at a higher level.

Studies have found that elderly persons and those with dementia will actively engage with a touchscreen and find something that they personally enjoy spending their time doing. This time is in addition to normal activities in the social care setting, so it greatly adds to the benefit all parties. It also acts as a good way to manage difficult patients, by allowing care home workers an opportunity to create person-centred approaches. Tablets also support communication between patients and their families as well as the caregivers.

Given the wide benefit of including touchscreen tablet use within a social care setting, it is a key way to bring higher quality of life to all stakeholders; the patients themselves gain through new activity opportunities that are tuned to their specific interests, the caregivers gain from finding a manageable way to handle diverse patient loads and needs, social care settings benefit by spending less on fun activities than they would if the activity were based outside the care setting, or by paying for external entertainers to visit the home, and families find an easy way to interact with their loved ones in social care settings, as well as being able to video call their loved ones.

### **BACKGROUND**

Interest is growing in using touchscreen technology within care settings and for residents who have dementia. Tablet use has been shown to increase engagement, cognitive stimulation, social interaction, and communication. For patients with dementia, it allows an ability for reminiscence to be created. Encouraging touchscreen use with activities like solving puzzles, listening to music, and visual arts is a common approach. The main aim of engaging the elderly and patients with dementia in this way is to increase the person's quality of life generally and their wellbeing.

The Association for Dementia Studies created a study which acted as an independent evaluation of a project using iPads within a care home setting. The study noted many positive observations showing that tablet usage acts as a tool to enhancing quality of life in older people and in those who live with dementia. Tablets are accessible and can be used one-on-one or in a group setting. In 98% of the cases reviewed in this study, tablet use was additional to existing activities and as such, increased activity rather than reduced or changed activity. The study found that in a care setting, around 70% of use of tablets were planned, while around half of cases noted that they would enjoy them in an impromptu setting as well. Music and song playing was the highest use of tablets in this study, followed by games like bingo, crosswords, quizzes and jigsaws. In 46% of the cases, family members were involved in the use as well.

Inspired Inspirations have found that elderly and dementia specific touchscreen users will often need to have access to larger screens, especially for those who are becoming visually impaired, as well as tablets which have safety feature, so the tablet doesn't drop, break or crack easily. The company solves this issue by building the touchscreen into a bespoke unit, on wheels so it is portable, which hold the large screen and keeps it from being able to be easily dropped or broken. It is sturdy and

robust enough to allow elderly users to enjoy engaging games safely and even lean on it should they need to.

## **CASE STUDY EXAMPLE**

An example of how touchscreen use among the elderly and those with dementia can help create more happiness and positivity can be understood when considering a dementia patient that regularly “sun downs” at a certain time of day, where the person gets more anxious because they think they should be doing something at that time which was a part of their life in the past. By using a touchscreen activity table, care workers can change subject matter with dementia patients faster and keep their interest on the new subject. This allows the person to stop being anxious about the issue that they believe they should be doing at that stage and concentrate on something else. An example is by getting the patient to talk about where they lived or were married and find that location on Google maps Street View. When the person sees the place that they were referring to, they are happy to reminisce on the subject. In essence, the touch screen tables can be used as a great distraction technique.

Another good case example is where a person is from another country originally, or where their family resides abroad, and they are isolated without many visits. By using the touchscreen, the elderly person has a new outlet to find activities they are interested in to spend time on and are also able to contact relatives abroad for on-camera calls, which increases their quality of life. Photographs of people and places that are special to the care home resident can be accessed through the touchscreen, which can uniquely be changed to search for meaningful places, subjects, and activities. For a care home resident that lived abroad or holds special interest in a place or topic that is not easily available to them within the care setting, the use of a touchscreen becomes a conduit between the person and the subject that makes them happy.

## **CONCLUSION**

There are far more positive benefits to integrating touchscreen use among elderly patients and those with dementia than there are negative points. While teaching elderly persons how to use the touchscreen might take a bit of time, the result is a more engaged person that has more opportunities to be happy doing something they enjoy. From looking up pictures, finding audio or written books, music or games, there are many different activities that can be chose through the touchscreen. The use also brings visitors together with their elderly or dementia inflicted family member, giving something to concentrate on for all persons and allow them to spend their visitation time in a fun and productive way.

## **REFERENCES**

Evans, Bray, Evans (2015) How iPads can support people with dementia living in care homes, [https://dw3i9sxi97owk.cloudfront.net/uploads/jobAttachments/vLrnZOkOStmO6jCFbPMU\\_Anchor-iPad-Report-final-120815-3.pdf](https://dw3i9sxi97owk.cloudfront.net/uploads/jobAttachments/vLrnZOkOStmO6jCFbPMU_Anchor-iPad-Report-final-120815-3.pdf)

Hung et al (2020), Using touchscreen tablets to support social connections and reduce responsive behaviours among people with dementia in care settings: A scoping review. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1471301220922745>

Inspired Inspirations (2022), How touch screen activity tables fill the void, <https://www.inspired-inspirations.com/>