A35 - Evaluating the effects of physical activity on individuals living with a dementia in residential accommodation

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BACKGROUND:
This project was funded by the DCRC. The study provided an opportunity for an aged care provider to participate in a knowledge translation project with support and guidance of researchers to implement and evaluate evidence-based physical activity interventions for individuals living with a dementia.

AIM:
The aim of this study was to evaluate the effect of physical activity interventions. The primary outcome measure was anxiety (CMAI scores) and the secondary outcome measures were: (i) wandering (Algase scores); (ii) quality of life (DEMQoL scores) and (iii) mobility (aggregated exercise score) on individuals living with a dementia.

METHODS:
Ethics approval was provided by the academic institution leading the project. The project was undertaken in the Illawarra, NSW. A total of four care homes and 80 individuals living with a dementia participated. The intervention was developed from the evidence-based literature and focus groups with staff from the aged care providers. Physiotherapists and physio aids implemented a structured physical activity program across these care homes. Descriptive statistics were undertaken to identify the effect of the intervention. Physiotherapists, physio aids and care staff were co-researchers. They delivered the intervention and changed their usual practices to deliver the evidence-based physical activity intervention and contributed to collecting the data.
FINDINGS:
The intervention was implemented for a minimum of three times per week over 12 weeks. Early indications suggest that the anxiety scores of individuals living with a dementia who participated in the physical activity intervention were positively influenced at the end of the 12 week intervention and sustained at four weeks later after the physical activity intervention had commenced.

The aged care provider now has:
- An evidenced-based template for physiotherapists to design effective physical activity interventions for individuals living with a dementia.
- Care staff and physio aids with the skills to implement and evaluate these physical activity interventions; and
- Registered Nurses with an understanding about how to use validated assessment tools to evaluate the effectiveness of care delivered to individuals living with a dementia.