Using a Multimodal Approach of Aromatherapy and Jigsaw Puzzles to Improve the Emotional Levels of a Geriatric Population Living With Alzheimer's Disease (AD)

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Geriatric populations living with Alzheimer’s disease often experience low mood levels that can exacerbate their symptoms and shorten their life spans. The most common treatments for these low mood levels are prescription medications; however, these pharmacological approaches are not always effective and not always readily available. The present study tests the hypothesis that jigsaw puzzle solving, with or without aromatherapy, can significantly improve mood in a geriatric population living with Alzheimer’s disease. Seniors living in memory care facilities were randomly split into two different treatment groups. The first group solved jigsaw puzzles for approximately 30 minutes. Patients in the second group were exposed to lavender aromatherapy while they solved jigsaw puzzles for approximately 30 minutes. Both groups had volunteers who assisted them and observed patient’s mood levels using the Observed Emotional Rating Scale (OERS) (Lawton et al. 1999), both before and after receiving treatment. Dependent sample t-tests were used pairwise to compare each patient’s mood before and after treatment, and these tests revealed significant improvements in both groups. Further comparisons showed a significantly greater improvement in the group exposed to aromatherapy while solving jigsaw puzzles, compared to the group that solved jigsaw puzzles without aromatherapy. These results support the hypothesis that exposure to multiple stimuli could help improve mood in a geriatric population living with Alzheimer’s disease, strongly suggesting that the pleasant aromas of the lavender and the cognitive themes of the jigsaw puzzles evoked a sense of nostalgia.

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