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Simple and Helpful



Therapeutic tools for individuals suffering from Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia



1. Who is this innovation for?

- for seniors suffering from different forms of dementia
- for their caregivers
- for senior care facilities, such as social welfare centers, daycare centers for seniors, psychogeriatric wards

2. What social problem does it address?

About 10 percent of individuals above 65 years of age are diagnosed with dementia and the percentage gets higher with age - it's at around 40 percent for 80 year olds and above. Individuals with dementia, depending on the stage of their illness, gradually lose ability for an independent life and require care.

The offer to make individuals with dementia more active is scarce in Poland and limited to the biggest cities. Tools for exercising are often expensive and difficult to find.

Caregivers often feel negative emotions towards the illness of their relatives. They often want to do something for them, but they don't know what, or how to do it. They lack ideas and tools to effectively manage their time.

3. Description

Where did the idea come from?

The **Simple and Helpful** innovation was created on the basis of Wrocław's Alzheimer's Center experience in working with individuals suffering from dementia.

Responding to caregivers requests, innovators who have contact with dementia patients on a daily basis wanted to find simple and accessible methods of activating the brain that would provide entertainment for the patients and help manage time

spent with the caregivers on top of exercising mind's flexibility, cognitive functions, or orientation in time and space.

Essence of the innovation

Simple and Helpful is a set of 10 tools for therapy for elders with cognitive disabilities. The tools were designed to be built by caregivers. Experts made sure that the tools have a real therapeutic value and are adjusted to needs and abilities of elder individuals, while allowing for an active participation on behalf of the caregiver. Both tools and the user's guide were tested with individuals suffering from dementia and their caregivers. This innovation constitutes a support not only for patients, but also for their caregivers, who often don't know what to do with their wards, how to activate them, exercise their memory and how to fill up their time. The innovation gives them a chance to do something more than simply administer medicine. Thanks to these tools they can spend time with patients that is beneficial to their health and provides them with stimuli and entertainment.



photo: Anna Podstawka

Innovation step by step

A caregiver who comes to a clinic with a patient for tests is given instructions pertaining to **Simple and Helpful** in the form of a publication. If they use a computer they will be also able to send a link to the innovation's website (<https://www.prosteipomocne.pl/>). Next, at home or with help of the family, he or she will make the tools for the therapeutic work with their patient. Instructions are divided according to the level of difficulty: easy, medium and hard. Each tool contains a description with information on how to work with seniors and what are the benefits of it. A caregiver should understand the concept behind a tool he or she is making. Materials necessary to complete each tool are easily accessible and often used on an everyday basis: egg cartons, grits, piece of cardboard, ping pong balls, etc.

Tools have different levels of difficulty, which allows for adjusting them to the needs and cognitive abilities of a particular senior on the one hand, while on the other to his condition in any given moment. The level of difficulty can be raised along with improvements to patient's general state, or decreased following a regress. Tools are the most useful with individuals in early and early-to-mid stages of dementia.



Photo from the film on innovation **Simple and Helpful**

I have something to work with now. Sometimes we get some funding, but we didn't have tools specifically for that kind of exercise. This is very helpful and that's what we mostly base our work on these days, since we don't have anything else dedicated to exercising cognitive skills.

Occupational therapist

I think these tools give me a wonderful opportunity to spend time with grandma and develop a relationship. I spend time with her without tools as well – I don't need an excuse to come to see her. But the tools make it much easier. We're spending more time together and I'm happy to interact with her.

Caregiver

Regular use of the tools can have a positive impact on seniors suffering from dementia. All the tools stimulate cognitive functions described in the manual (some support other areas as well). In case of individuals in the early stages of dementia using this innovation could result in temporary improvement of some of the cognitive functions, while in later stages it should help slow down their diminishment.

Edyta Bonk, psychologist, SWPS University PhD Candidate

How much does it cost?

Starting the innovation doesn't require any money and is limited to the costs of purchasing materials necessary to build the tools. Because the required materials are easily accessible, an average cost of one tool oscillates around 5pln.

4. Who's behind it?



foto: Kova Production

Daniel Wójcik – psychologist by trade, he works on neuropsychology diagnostics of dementia at Wrocław's Alzheimer's Center. He is the co-creator of Lower Silesia Alzheimer Foundation.

Ania Podstawka – psychology student at the SWSP University in Wrocław. After graduation she plans to engage in work with elders. That's why coordinating the **Simple and Helpful** project has been a perfect first step on her professional path. She's interested in history of psychology and neuropsychology diagnosis and rehabilitation.

Jagoda Rusowicz – music therapist and a graduate of Wrocław's Academy of Music and a course for music therapists by Academy for Neurologic Music Therapy. She continues her studies as a PhD candidate at Wrocław's University School of Physical Education. She's interested in effects of music on humans, neurodidactics, psychology of creativity and gerontology. She works with seniors with memory disorders and individuals with mental illness history. In 2018 she worked on the "Neuromuse

– meetings for dementia patients and their caregivers” organized by the Lower Silesia Alzheimer Foundation.

Marta Zapalska – graduate of pedagogy studies and medical studies with occupational therapist specialization. Currently, she’s studying speech therapy and works as an occupational therapist on a daytime psychogeriatric ward. She’s interested in all kinds of crafts.

Beata Suścicka – architecture student at Wrocław Polytechnic and Art and Glass Design at the E. Geppert’s Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław. She’s interested in broadly understood design.

Daria Lis – psychology student at the Wrocław University. She is interested in neuropsychology and gerontology and she’d like to pursue career in these fields. Beyond the Simple and Helpful innovation, she has worked on workshops for seniors on dementia prophylactics, as well as a series of classes “Saturday with a board game,” showing how to combine fun gameplay with mind exercises, both organized by the Wrocław Alzheimer’s Center.

5. Contact information

www.prosteipomocne.pl

www.innowacjеспoleczne.org.pl/proste-i-pomocne

www.alzheimer.wroclaw.pl



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