



Snoezelen – A new intervention in Alzheimer and Dementia care

Ogden, UT. – As the Utah population ages, there is a reported increase in Alzheimer and Dementia patients. In order to stay on the cutting edge of care and treatment for these patients, Hospice For Utah is the first hospice in the Wasatch Front to employ the new ground breaking therapy known as “SNOEZELEN”.

SNOEZELEN was developed in the 1970's by two Dutch therapists (Jan Hulsegge and Ad Verheul) and was brought over to the United States in the 1990's. Early research into sensory deprivations suggested that an under-stimulated brain will begin to hallucinate in order to make up for the lost sensory input. Then in the 1970's, more concentrated studies on institutionalized geriatric patients (nursing homes, etc...) proved that enriching ones' environment can lead to less anxiety and depression. It was studies and research such as these that lead to the development of this multi-sensory therapy.

SNOEZELEN is derived from the words “snuffeln” (to sniff, to snuffle) and “doezelen” (to doze, to snooze). Behind SNOEZELEN is a multi functional concept: In a purposely designed room, the use of light and sound elements, along with pleasing aroma's and tactile objects, initiate the senses. These different elements have both relaxing and activating effects on the different perception areas. The specific design directs and arranges the stimuli; it creates interest, evokes memories and guides relationships.

The SNOEZELEN environment is safe and non-threatening. Children and adults with disabilities or other limiting conditions enjoy gentle stimulation of the primary senses. There is no need for intellectual reasoning. Participants experience self-control, autonomous discovery, and exploration-achievements that overcome inhibitions, enhance self-esteem, and reduce tension. Free from the expectations of others and away from the pressures of directed care, they recuperate and relax.

Research has shown that multi-sensory environments offer a wealth of benefits, often affording the participant and caregiver an opportunity to improve communications, enhance their understanding of each other, and build trust in their relationship. SNOEZELEN is a wonderful experience to enjoy and share-a place that replenishes the spirit.

Our goal at Hospice For Utah is to use the SNOEZELEN approach to provide our patients with an alternative form of therapy. While Alzheimer patients may lose basic communication skills and forget how to dress or cook for themselves, the SNOEZELEN method can help reduce antisocial behavior, improve memory, mood, verbal skills and concentration. Although the SNOEZELEN therapy does not reverse the progression of Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia, the therapy is extremely goal oriented. If being SNOEZELED helps a patient feel less stressed, less fearful, calmer and more relaxed, then we have increased the quality of that person's life, if even for a moment.