

## **Use of Art at True Davidson Acres**

<b>Date:</b>	May 5, 2008
<b>To:</b>	Advisory Committee on Homes for the Aged
<b>From:</b>	General Manager, Homes for the Aged
<b>Ward:</b>	Ward 31
<b>Reference Number:</b>	

### **SUMMARY**

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At the April 18, 2008 meeting of the Advisory Committee on Homes for the Aged, committee members expressed interest in the use of art at True Davidson Acres and acknowledged positively that most of the homes are now doing mural paintings, with a positive impact on residents' quality of life. Further, the Committee suggested that the division should consider writing a research-type article about the positive impact that art has in a long-term care home environment. Members of the Committee may recall that such an article was jointly developed by True Davidson Acres and Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care when the Use of Art Research Project was conducted at True Davidson Acres West, during the redevelopment of the home. This project demonstrated the value of art in way-finding, contributing to a calming environment and decreasing anxiety.

Further, staff understood that the April 18, 2008 request also demonstrated the Committee's own interest in understanding more about the use of art at True Davidson Acres and/or other homes. This report is intended to provide high level information on the success of the quality improvement project at True Davidson Acres.

#### **Financial Impact**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

#### **ISSUE/BACKGROUND**

One of the second floor resident home areas at True Davidson Acres is secured by the use of magnetic keypads, in order to provide safety for residents at high risk to wander due to dementia and/or responsive behaviours. Staff observed that when some residents see others entering and/or exiting the area, their attention is drawn to the door and residents attempt to follow. When they are unable to exit, anxiety and agitation can result, which is upsetting to the resident, family members and other residents.

Staff also observed that one particular resident was drawn to the fire pull station and began to trigger the fire alarm on a regular basis, which resulted in noise stimuli that increased anxiety and agitation amongst other residents and the arrival of Toronto Fire Services for an unnecessary alarm.

Second floor staff assessed the environment and the root causes of the increased anxiety and felt that improvements could be made through the use of art. Staff formed a quality improvement team and utilized the PDSA (plan-do-study-act) cycle to determine opportunities for improvement.

The team identified triggers that were creating negative outcomes, including but not limited to:

- anxiety and agitation amongst residents related to a lack of positive, calming stimulation;
- environment was of the same light colour paint;
- increased noise levels; and
- visible triggers, e.g. the exit doors, fire pull station.

The team hypothesized that the therapeutic use of art, using specific colours and designs could produce a calming effect for residents.

Toronto Homes for the Aged endorses and utilizes the Gentlecare approach. Second floor staff reviewed the goals and strategies associated with Gentlecare, in particular the positive link between nature and supporting the strengths of individuals with cognitive impairment and associated responsive behaviours. The environment provides many positive cues; for example, flowers, gardens and meadows provide a comforting and non-threatening effect for individuals with cognitive impairment. The colour blue has a restful, calming effect. In fact, research has demonstrated that the use of the colour blue in environmental design can actually lower blood pressure. The colour green is associated with growth and life and is also a very restful colour. Further, green reduces central nervous system activity and helps people feel calm.

Staff decided to use murals to create a sense of calm and camouflage exit doors. A professional painter with considerable experience in painting murals in soft tones was retained to complete the project. The area adjacent to the doorway in the resident home area was painted with a garden type scene with mauves, greens, providing a very calming effect; the mural extended across the exit from the unit. Residents' behaviours changed; instead of becoming anxious and trying to exit the unit, they began to regard and enjoy the garden scene, without attempting to exit.

Following this initial success, staff decided to complete coverage murals at all exit/entrance areas. A second foyer area was painted with a pasture type scene, with predominant shades of greens; a third lounge area was painted with a water scene with blues and large friendly water animals and fish.

Residents are enjoying all three (3) areas and anxiety and noise has visibly decreased.

## COMMENTS

The team has observed very definite positive changes in behaviour. The noise level has been reduced resulting in more effective behaviour management with less escalation. Residents are calmer and seem to enjoy viewing the artwork. Areas have been furnished with single wing back chairs for comfortable seating, recognizing the benefits of single chairs over shared space on sofas for individuals with significant cognitive impairment.

Throughout the quality improvement project, the team tracked specific indicators to evaluate the success of art in diverting negative behaviours.

	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
# fire alarms pulled	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
# exit seeking behaviours witnessed	60	70	67	20	10	10	10	8	8
# responsive behaviour incidents witnessed	38	36	30	26	18	16	12	10	8

Family members identified that the environmental changes in the resident home area had produced positive changes in behaviour amongst their family members; residents seemed calmer and less agitated; family visits were more pleasant and relaxed.

Although there have been positive outcomes through this quality improvement work, it is acknowledged that uncontrollable variables impact on the availability of statistically reliable data. For example, information was not collected in a controlled setting; different groups and individuals were present on the resident home area throughout the period of the quality improvement project; and residents were at different stages in their dementia. Evaluation was completed through informal focus groups, which lack standardization and validation.

Nonetheless, the results to date have demonstrated very positive outcomes with a positive impact on quality of life and safety for residents, families and staff.

## CONTACT

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## SIGNATURE

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