

## Gentle Persuasive Approaches (GPA) in Dementia Care

### Summary

- Alzheimer Society of New Brunswick (ASNB) offered a virtual dementia care training called Gentle Persuasive Approaches (GPA) Community to friends and family members who were caregivers for People Living with Dementia (PLWD) to help them respond to behaviors associated with dementia.
  - Informal caregivers independently completed 4 virtual training modules then participated in a virtual interactive follow-up session facilitated by certified GPA coaches.
  - The training aimed to provide informal caregivers with knowledge and confidence when responding to behaviours associated with dementia.
- This project evaluated caregivers' ability to manage dementia-related behaviours and their satisfaction with the training. It also assessed the training's impact on the responsive behaviours of PLWD and their hospital visits.
- Informal caregiver participants were 56 women, 4 men, and 1 person who preferred to self-describe gender. Participants were a mix of both anglophones (47 people) and francophones (14 people).

<b>HSPF Focus Area</b>	Increasing independence, quality of life, and promoting healthy lifestyles
<b>Project Start &amp; End Date</b>	March 2, 2020- December 31, 2022
<b>Organization/Agency</b>	Alzheimer Society of New Brunswick (ASNB)
<b>Location</b>	Province-wide

Indicator	Outcome / Result	Quote
<p><i>* The team that compiled this summary was not provided with data to support many of the outcomes listed below. As such, all results presented should be viewed with caution. See the Methods and Comparison section for more details.</i></p>		
<b>Caregiver behaviour management self-efficacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey responses showed that participants' confidence increased when performing the techniques and tasks necessary to support PLWD. The magnitude and sustainability of these benefits were not reported.</li> <li>Specifically, during focus groups caregivers expressed greater self-efficacy in communicating with PLWD to reduce responsive behaviours. During focus groups, participants expressed concern about their ability to support PLWD as the disease worsened. Continued learning was thought to be crucial for maintaining their level of confidence in the future.</li> </ul>	<p>"This helped me deal with her in a safe and positive way, as well as confidence for me to know, to understand what's happening, when that's happening, and what to do, what actions to take."</p> <p>"I've learned a lot there — my confidence level is better, but I know I've got a long ways to go and a lot to learn."</p>
<b>Loneliness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In focus groups, caregivers expressed feeling less lonely after participating in the virtual GPA Community training</li> </ul>	<p>"It's not only about the learning, it's about being almost like a community, a support system, so it's really good to have that opportunity as well."</p>
<b>Caregiver burden</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Caregivers' sense of burden did not appear to change over the three-month period assessed based on survey responses.</li> <li>Participants valued the community aspect of the training, expressing during focus groups that it was helpful to be learning with others who shared their experience.</li> </ul>	<p>"... it was very powerful and really kind of made me understand what he must be going through."</p>

Indicator	Outcome / Result
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<b>Caregiver life satisfaction</b>	There was no change in caregivers' life satisfaction from before to after GPA Community training according to survey responses.
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### Methods and Comparison

Caregiver participants responded to online surveys before and three months after attending GPA Community training. Statistical tests were used to draw conclusions from the survey responses. While results were presented in a way that reflected statistical significance, the statistical data was not made available. As such, all results presented should be viewed with caution when used to inform decision-making.

Caregivers also participated in virtual focus groups using the Zoom for Healthcare platform three months after the GPA Community training to offer feedback related to the training program. It is unclear whether structured qualitative analyses were used to develop themes from the focus groups. As such, the presented focus group findings should be used with caution.

### Conclusions and Learnings

- Informal caregivers gained confidence in supporting PLWD through GPA Community training.
- Caregivers felt supported by the community of participants who shared their experience of caring for PLWD.
- After the study period, staff members from two home support agencies were trained as GPA Community certified coaches, which will allow for future program delivery.

### Recommendations

- Offer in-person training for informal caregivers to help reduce loneliness through community support and enable hands-on skills practice.
- Create opportunities for informal caregivers to maintain their community of support after the training ends.
- Feedback gathered in focus groups was used to make recommendations to AGE Inc., the organization that designed the GPA Community training, so the program can be adapted for informal caregivers.
  - Specific recommendations included more opportunities for application-based group work, examples, and problem-solving; reduced focus on theory and content specific to healthcare professionals; greater focus on practical skills; and adding content on coping with the feelings and experiences of informal caregivers.

### Next Steps

The project team applied for funding through the Department of Social Development with whom they have an existing contract; however, if successful, this funding would not be allocated to the GPA Community project but would instead be used for a separate informal caregiver program that has been used across the country. The project team has been tackling new initiatives through their partnership with Horizon.

### Disclaimer

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

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