

Cognitive Stimulation for Successful Aging - perceptions of Social Educators

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: The phenomenon of demographic aging is one of the major contemporary world challenges, with Portugal being one of the most aged countries in the Europe^[1]. Several efforts have been made to ensure that this increase in life span can effectively be translated into quality of life^[1], as well as in improvements in the care and attention to the more dependent elderly^[2]. The development of cognitive stimulation intervention has been associated to the promotion of successful aging^[3,4] as well as to the protection against earlier dementia and cognitive decline^[5]. The Social Educator, through a socio-educational intervention, may be part of the professional answer to this challenge. **OBJECTIVES:** This study aims to evaluate the perceptions of Social Educators (n = 4), who have been involved in the development of a cognitive stimulation program, about the benefits of this intervention to the persons who participated in the program at the domains of Interest, Humor, Initiative, Satisfaction and Communication, assessed through an observation scale (1-5), about each of participant in each session. **METHODS:** The program comprised 14 sessions, repeated over 3 cycles. Two groups of elderly people with cognitive impairment or mild dementia, living in a nursing home, were organized. The first with 7 participants was developed 2 times a week and the other with 5 participants was developed 3 times a week. **RESULTS:** The results show that the perception of the Social Educators is considerably positive, with the mean values of all the dimensions considered in the assessment above 3.5. The dimension with highest values was Interest (mean of 4.74 and 4.41 in the 2x and 3x/week groups, respectively) and the lowest was Communication (mean of 4.52 in the 2x group) and Initiative (3.77 in the 3x group). The comparison between cycles allowed to realize that the perception of the considered dimensions is more favorable in the 2nd and 3rd cycles of application of the program, which happened for both groups. Comparing the two groups, there were better results for all dimensions in the group where the program was developed twice a week. **CONCLUSION:** In summary, the results point to a very positive perception of Social Educators about the benefits of the program. The dimensions evaluated are

important indicators of successful aging, so the very positive assessment presented here may indicate the contribution of such programs to a higher quality of life in advanced age.

Keywords: *Cognitive Stimulation, Successful Aging, Social Education*

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