

Space retrieval treatment with dementia

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Article Review: Space Retrieval Treatment with Dementia The common belief is that people with dementia cannot learn. This prejudice results in constant failure to teach a patient (Camp, Antenuci, Brush & Slaminski, 2012, p. 97). As a result, authors proposed that treatment should be based on a belief that these patients can learn. The brain's ability to memorize is not completely destroyed by dementia (Camp et al, 2012, p. 97). Semantic memory, or the ability to remember names, is more resistant to adverse effects of dementia than episodic memory, or the ability to remember actions (Camp et al., 2012, p. 97). Repetition priming, or memory on habits, remains best preserved (Camp et al., 2012, p. 97). As a result, spaced retrieval (SR) is used to increase memory retention.

Dementia is an illness where, according to authors, spaced retrieval plays a crucial role in therapies (Camp et al., 2012, p. 102). According to Camp et al. (2012), “[s]paced retrieval (SR) is an evidence-based memory intervention that can be effective for helping people with mild to moderate dementia” (p. 97). This procedure is based on turning a memory into a habit through repetition of an answer to the clinician's question (Camp et al., 2012, p. 97). External props, such as index cards, can be used as well (Camp et al., 2012, p. 99).

Effects of SR are reflected upon increased functional skills. Patients can through SR gain new motor skills, can learn and utilize new compensatory strategies and prosthetic devices (Camp et al., 2012, p. 98). Learning how to swallow was conducted by the authors in such a way that they would inform the patient about the goal of the practice and then ask a question, whereas the patient would need to answer it and perform the corresponding action (Camp et al., 2012, p. 99).

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This method was tested and proven to be successful in treatment of patients with cognitive impairments (Camp et al., 2012, p. 98). Moreover, previous authors found that this method increases long term retention better than encoding (Camp et al., 2012, p. 98).

However, despite this innovation in approach to patients with dementia, this procedure does not eliminate dementia; it only helps patients memorize an action for a specific period of time (Camp et al., 2012, p. 100).

References

Camp, C., Antenuci, V., Brush, J. and Slaminski, T. (2012). Using spaced retrieval to effectively treat dysphagia in clients with dementia. *Perspectives on Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders (Dysphagia)*, 21(3), 96-104. doi: 10.1044/sasd21.3.96.