

Title

Positive effect 'Happy Games'

Abstract

The knowledge center innovation of healthcare of the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences has investigated 54 people with a form of dementia if existing games suitable for the iPad have a positive effect on the well-being of people.

The games used during the investigation were found to be suitable by the Alzheimer foundation of The Netherlands.

A total of 177 observations were made at several healthcare institutions in Rotterdam.

The results of the research show that playing a "Happy Game" is experienced as a pleasant and meaningful activity. The caregivers see the "Happy Games" as an extension of the current range of activities.

A caveat that can be placed with the "Happy Games" is that people who have some form of dementia often need help with operating the iPad. It is therefore important that there is someone around the client, who can help with this iPad game. This is because there can be a sense of failure in the person with dementia, which can have a negative effect on well-being

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Target group research:

54 clients with a form of dementia

16 caregivers (caregivers, activity counselors and psychologists)

Results

A total of 177 observations were made with 54 clients (24 men, 30 women; average age 83 years, range 59-94). Of these clients, most (88%) had no computer experience. In the opinion of the care providers, 23 clients had (moderately) severe dementia and 31 clients had mild to moderate dementia. Most of the observations were made in the (shared) living room, but sometimes also in the client's bedroom or in a separate room.

The research has shown that most people with dementia accept the iPad without any problems. The client did not want to play in 17 of the 177 observations. Clients who did play played 21 minutes on average. Sometimes the playing time was only a few minutes, 66 of the 160 game situations lasted 30 minutes (or longer). Clients with mild to moderate dementia played longer on average than clients with (moderately) severe dementia. The game that was most frequently offered was shuffleboard (82 observations; offered as the first game with 45 observations), followed at some distance by Talking Tom (with 29 observations in total) and checkers (with 21 observations in total). The three new games were played 15 to 19 times. More than three-quarters of the clients had a neutral mood prior to playing.

While playing, the number of clients with a positive mood increased. At the end of the game, the mood generally reached the pre-game level again.



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Clients with dementia often experienced playing on the iPad as positive. It gave some clients a sense of achievement (for example, by obtaining the highest possible scores on shuffles). Happy gaming also contributed to a positive self-image and a sense of belonging. Some clients mentioned that they enjoyed having something on their hands. Certain games, such as Tesla Toy, evoked feelings of wonder

Healthcare providers also mentioned the positive effect on clients' self-image. They saw that clients had fun playing the happy games and that sometimes more passive clients were activated by the game on the iPad. Negative experiences were seen when the game did not match the client's ambition or interest (for example, the child found the game too childish), when the client had difficulty operating the game or did not understand the game, or the game did not meet the requirements the expectations (for example due to different rules of the game such as during checkers). Sometimes playing on the iPad led to a feeling of failure and a negative self-image of the client, especially when he realized "he could no longer do it." Hardly any negative experiences were mentioned in the focus groups with the caregivers, although the caregivers described that problems with the operation of the touchscreen frustrated some clients and impaired their self-esteem. Some caregivers found the iPad screen too small for their clients, but on the other hand saw the small size as an advantage when an individual client within the group wanted to play a game.

The caregivers found the happy games on the iPad in their current form not just suitable as an individual activity for people with dementia. Some clients were able to play the game independently on the iPad, but often the clients needed instructions or they had to be encouraged to continue playing. Clients also needed regular help with restarting a game or clicking annoying pop-up menus. Furthermore, the caregivers did not like leaving a client alone with the relatively expensive iPad. Although situations were described in which clients were playing happily for longer periods of time, the caregivers also indicated that the happy games would keep most clients busy for a very short time.

Reasons for not regularly offering the happy games to clients were that this was not yet a routine, that the iPad was not immediately available (it was stored away under lock or key, or in another department), lack of enthusiasm about the happy games selected for In Touch, or a preference for real board games (in the group).

This research has shown that people with dementia are playing happy games on the iPad as a pleasant and meaningful activity. The caregivers are also positive about happy gaming on the iPad. The caregivers see happy gaming as an addition to the regular range of activities that is too challenging for some clients and often concerns a group activity. It is important to look for the right match between game, touchscreen skills and the ambitions and interests of the client. Furthermore, the caretakers must be instructed in the use of the iPad and the games and the iPad must be readily available in the ward. To promote independent play, the control of some games must be made more logical. An interactive selection tool and a database with dementia-friendly happy games can support their use in practice, both in care institutions and at home

Links

Kenniscentrum zorginnovaties. (2014). *Evaluatie van individuele happy games op de iPad voor mensen met dementie*. Rotterdam.