alzheimer's association®

ADvancing Care

Volume 1
Spring 2011

Introducing ...

The Alzheimer's Association, NYC Chapter is pleased to launch a brand new newsletter, for people in New York City who work in nursing homes and other residential care settings, and for the families and friends of those who live there. So much good work is going on in facilities all over the country; we think a newsletter is an excellent way of sharing experiences and ideas for improving the care we provide to people with dementia.

Anyone who is interested in receiving our free newsletter via email can do so by going to www.alznyc.org/LTC and signing up for the newsletter.

Sign Up & Join Us Online!
www.alznyc.org/ltc

We welcome your suggestions for articles, and want to hear about your successes. We will share information we gather about resources (books, movies, training materials), and news about upcoming conferences and other training opportunities. If you have news or suggestions for the newsletter, email LTC@alznyc.org or call 646-744-2963.

Finger Food: What's New?

Finger food is an idea that has been around for a long time. Many people with advanced dementia, who can no longer use utensils, are able to feed themselves if they have finger food they like, presented to them in an encouraging way by staff or family members. Being fed by someone else is often an uncomfortable and sometimes embarrassing experience, and can cause people to further lose interest in eating. While not everyone is able to benefit from finger food, those who can often take more interest in eating, and sometimes find it easier to take meals in the social setting of the dining room. And, if some residents need less assistance with eating, staff is free to concentrate more on those who are not able to help themselves.

Ariane Stein, a dietitian in France specializing in Alzheimer's and gerontology, has done some interesting research on the use of finger foods, and gave us some new ideas about how to make them more appealing to residents. In addition to the carrot sticks, pieces of fruit, crackers, small muffins and sandwiches we all think of as finger food, Mrs. Stein experimented with taking traditional French dishes such as casserole of beef, veal stew, pork with lentils, even rice pudding, and preparing them as finger food. There are few things as comforting as familiar foods and tastes, so imagine macaroni and cheese, lasagna, your favorite chicken dish, or pumpkin pie as finger food!

Ms. Stein did her research in a nursing home in the Dordogne region of France, Le Verger Des Balans, with support from Dr. Genevieve Demoures. The purpose of the study was to show that nutritionally balanced, visually

UPCOMING EVENTS

29 April

11th Annual Memory Disorders Forum
8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m

The New York Academy of Medicine
1216 Fifth Avenue
(entrance on 103rd Street)
www.alz.org/nyc or
646-744-2994
This Forum focuses on the transitions that occur during the early years of mild cognitive impairment (MCI), Alzheimer's or a related disorder, recognizing the spectrum of changes that early-stage people, their care partners and professionals frequently encounter. For care partners and professionals.

13 May

5th Annual Geriatric Mental Health Alliance Conference
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m

Marriot New York City
333 Adams Street,
Brooklyn, NY
This day-long conference will feature a keynote address and a variety of workshops that will explore the behavioral health needs of older adults.
For conference details and registration visit their website at: http://events.SignUp4.com/obstaclesandopportunities, or contact conference manager, Michelle Scott, (866) 367-6564, email mscott@gatheringsbydesign.com.

Ongoing

Education Sessions
For Recreation Therapists and Activity Leaders, by Robin Wexler, CTRS
516-799-7094 or
profrobinw@aol.com
Locations: Somerset Gardens Assisted Living, Plainview, Long Island; Cedar Manor, Ossining, New York; Morris Hall, Lawrenceville, New Jersey; Nassau Extended Care Center, Hempstead, Long Island; Sheepshead Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Brooklyn, New York.

appealing, easy to pick up food could provide residents with Alzheimer's the ability to feed themselves and be more independent.

Over the course of a year, Ms. Stein worked with twenty residents long enough to assess the impact of the approach and the recipes she developed. Ten of the twenty residents were consistently fed by a caregiver at the start of the study, nine of whom improved to the point where they needed only partial assistance, or very limited assistance. The other ten residents started the study needing some assistance, and all of them improved to the point where they needed less help (thus giving staff more time to help others).

This is both compelling, and consistent with what we have known to be good practice for many years. What is new here is Mrs. Stein's creation of recipes that are interesting, comforting and familiar to residents, as well as nutritionally balanced.

In keeping with the MDS-3 and its increased emphasis on responding to resident preference, the task is to learn more about foods that the resident enjoys through observation, trying out different types, and talking with family and friends. Mrs. Stein has successfully worked with Dietary Departments in France to develop programs that integrate nutritionally balanced meals with resident preferences and overall plans of care. The rewards are the pleasure taken in eating, greater dignity, improved nutritional status, and the opportunity for staff to focus more of their time on residents who are unable to help themselves.

As the study results also underscore, it is essential residents not be given a diet of finger food while they are still able to use cutlery. The use of fingers to consume food is a natural progression of Alzheimer's disease. As with all other aspects of care, staff will need to evaluate, step by step, what works best for each individual resident, in terms of their preference and comfort. For more information about the program she has developed, Mrs. Stein can be contacted at arianebordeaux@gmail.com.

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