

Northern Home Care Knowledge to Action Strategies that Support Persons with Dementia and their Family Caregivers

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Giving voice to seniors is at the heart of the project undertaken by Dr. Forbes and three health care aides in the town of Westlock Alberta. In this case, however, the seniors they are supporting have dementia, which can rob a person of effective communication skills. And when people with dementia cannot express what they want or need, they may become agitated, frustrated, fearful and perhaps even aggressive.

“We knew of a program developed by the Alzheimer Society of Ontario,” says Forbes. “We wanted to see if their program could help health care aides more effectively support people living with dementia and whether the program would be an effective part of orientation for all new health care aides and licensed practical nurses.”

The program is based on the understanding that behaviour is not “unpredictable, meaningless aggression or agitation,” but rather “responsive.”

The person is responding to something negative, frustrating, or confusing in his or her environment

The reasons or triggers for challenging behaviours may be external rather than within the individual

Problems in the social or physical environment can be addressed and changed

Once trained, caregivers rely on a simple wheel designed by the UFirst! program to walk them through a reflective process.