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# Addressing Occupational Deprivation and Alienation in Rural Skilled Nursing Facilities Through an Activities Resource Guide

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OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

## Abstract

- The purpose of this product was to create a resource guide on leisure activities for the activities department in a rural skilled nursing facility (SNF) to address common chronic conditions and support the needs or wants of the SNF residents.
- With aging comes more chronic conditions and less physical activity, socialization, and time engaged in meaningful activities, affecting quality of life (QOL) and well-being (Causey-Upton, 2015; Cudjoe et al., 2020; Nedjeljeko et al., 2021; Portillo et al., 2023; Sen et al., 2022; Smallfield & Molitor, 2018; World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Providing residents with more meaningful leisure activities will assist the SNF staff in addressing those common concerns through improvement to physical, social, creative, and cognitive skills (Cirillo, A., 2022; Senior Services of America, n.d.).
- A literature review needs assessment was completed to find effective ways to address common chronic conditions and occupational deprivation in the adult population residing in SNFs. Various health concerns of the population and best approaches were analyzed, as well as increasing leisure engagement, and what activities should be utilized in a SNF. The environment-health-occupation-well-being (E-HOW) model was used to guide the literature review needs assessment and develop the product (Pizzi & Richards, 2017). The final product was created while completing a doctoral placement in a rural SNF.
- The final product is an activity resource guide that provides activities to SNF staff to positively impact the residents' quality of life and well-being. This guide can be used and adapted for rural SNFs or assisted living facilities to provide ideas for activities that may fit the residents' needs and interests.
- The resource guide was created from learning about the residents' interests and comparing those to what the evidence states are the most beneficial activities to address common health disparities seen in the population. This product is intended to enhance the residents' health, well-being, and QOL through activities that address physical, social, creative, and cognitive skills. Future research should determine additional activities that further address all skill and leisure areas that will benefit overall health for residents of SNFs.

## Literature Review

This literature review assessment was developed through the environment-health-occupation-well-being (E-HOW) model (Pizzi & Richards, 2017), an occupational therapy model that focuses on overall well-being and quality of life (QOL) through the balance of environmental factors, health factors, and occupational participation through the outcomes of services (Pizzi & Richards, 2017).

Health	Environment	Occupational Participation
- Physical	- Social	- Occupations
- Mental	- Physical	- Occupational Demands
- Social	- Cultural	- Skills
- Spiritual		- Routines
		- Performance

- The 65+ community is vastly growing; in 2060, it is projected that roughly 24% of the U.S. population will be over the age of 65 (Welke & Brockevelt, 2019).
- As we age, we experience more chronic conditions and see less physical activity and socialization, less time engaged in occupations, and a decrease in QOL (Causey-Upton, 2015; Cudjoe et al., 2020; Nedjeljeko et al., 2021; Portillo et al., 2023; Sen et al., 2022; Smallfield & Molitor, 2018; World Health Organization [WHO], 2022).
- Chronic conditions and health disparities can be addressed, and/or the symptoms can be reduced, through activities that SNF residents participate in that are meaningful and address physical, social, and mental health and well-being (Causey-Upton, 2015; Knecht-Sabres et al., 2020; Portillo et al., 2023; Rafeedie et al., 2018; Smallfield et al., 2018; Welke & Brockevelt, 2019).

## Statement of Need

As the age 65 and older community grows more vast, so do health concerns for the population. Due to chronic conditions commonly seen within this population that limit their participation in meaningful activities, there are concerns related to individuals' QOL and well-being. Within SNFs, activities are typically used to help address these concerns; however, the activities do not always correlate with the residents' interests and occupations. While residents have the ability to choose what activities they attend, the activities must pique their interest and be something that they desire to engage in to achieve the greatest benefit to QOL and overall well-being. That being said, activities offered within SNF should reflect the interests and needs of residents residing in the facility while also addressing physical, social, and emotional concerns.

## Product

This guide was created to address common concerns amongst residents residing in a skilled nursing facility.

Common concerns impacting QOL and well-being:

- Sedentary lifestyles
- Social isolation
- Occupational deprivation
- Chronic conditions

The resource guide was developed to encourage more residents to participate in varying activities to improve their overall quality of life and well-being.

The resource guide addresses these concerns through physical, social, creative, and cognitive activities, while also offering recommendations most effective room set-up and techniques to ensure all residents can engage in the activities.

### Physical

Physical activity is crucial for older adults as it reduces the risk of falls, helps lower blood pressure or the risk of onset of high blood pressure, and improves mental health and cognitive functions (Senior Services of America, n.d.). As the recommended activities are seated exercises, either in the resident's mobility device or seated in a standard chair, this provides the residents with the opportunity to move many of their joints that they typically would not move during their sedentary day (Davenport, 2022).

### Social

Although many of the other activities allow for social participation, the activities in this section are explicitly designed to address the social isolation that is commonly seen amongst the older adult population (Cudjoe et al., 2020; Nedjeljeko et al., 2021; Sen et al., 2022; Smallfield & Molitor, 2018; WHO, 2022). Social activities can be very beneficial to the SNF population as they can reduce loneliness, improve sleep during the night, maintain physical function, and reduce cognitive decline (Senior Services of America, n.d.).

### Creative

Creative activities provide an excellent opportunity for the residents to address their fine motor skills that are not specifically being addressed through physical activities (Senior Services of America, n.d.). These activities are cognitively stimulating as they allow the residents to build, color, create, and problem-solve during the task (Senior Services of America, n.d.). Creative activities can also be beneficial to those diagnosed with dementia and Alzheimer's, as the activities can reduce the individual's agitation, anger, anxiety, confusion, or have positive impacts on sundowning (Senior Services of America, n.d.).

### Cognitive

Activities provided within this section have been created to address and maintain or improve the resident's cognitive functional level. These activities are used to help slow down any cognitive impairments that come with aging as well as help the residents feel more independent by being able to solve some of the problems that occur daily on their own (Senior Services of America, n.d.).

## Limitations & Recommendations

### Strengths

- Addresses a variety of leisure activities attractive to SNF residents
- Detailed and easy implementation of activities for facility staff
- Cost-effective resources recognize facility budget constraints
- All activities are adaptable or modifiable for the greatest number of residents to be involved
- Includes and encourages usage of current technology

### Limitations

- The activities chosen are specific to a SNF location and may not reflect the needs and interests of residents in other locations
- The population had various physical and cognitive abilities due to the location that may be too advanced for the activities chosen
- Limited research on the beneficial effect of the implementation of activities specifically in SNFs

### Recommendations

- Activities directors and staff members in SNFs should utilize this product to create more engaging and meaningful leisure activities to address all aspects of health and well-being
- Facilities should print the guide and have it accessible for all staff members to reference and utilize
- Facilities should track activity participation to analyze engagement by residents and use the data to make changes and guide improvements
- Further research should be conducted on beneficial activities implemented for residents specifically in SNF setting

## Contribution to Practice

- Provides resources to all staff in SNFs or assisted living facilities to help plan group activities or provide suggestions for leisure activities residents can engage in, through small groups lead by knowledgeable staff.
- The activities provide a variety of choices to address physical, social, cognitive, and creative skills using SNF resources.
- The guide provides ways to adapt and modify activities to better fit the needs of the residents.

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