Dementia Dining Program
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Customer Service Leadership Project

Introduction
HCR-ManorCare Fond du Lac is a 108-bed, for-profit, skilled nursing facility located in WI. The facility has a 39-bed Memory Care Unit. It was identified that there was a need to create an enhanced dementia dining experience to involve staff and residents in person-centered care. The program focuses on creating a calm, homelike atmosphere that promotes engagement during meals.

Knowledge and Background
Background
Refusing to eat, rejecting food, not being able to use utensils, not recognizing food, difficulty chewing and swallowing, and becoming too distracted to eat are common difficulties experienced with a dementia resident. These create further challenges for frontline staff as well as concerns regarding meal and fluid intake.

Current Research
Some of the main sources I used while creating this program were LeadingAge, Alzheimer’s Association, and American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. These are several statistics I considered:
- 47% Nursing Home Population has Dementia
- $140 Billion paid by Medicare & Medicaid to care for people with dementia
- Over half of dementia residents lose some ability to feed themselves properly.

Methodology
Kotter’s Change Model and Deming’s PDCA Cycle were used when creating this program. The Change Model was crucial based on the amount of culture change and transformation this program ensued. The PDCA Cycle assists with continuous improvement and learning; this is a new program so we are constantly evolving.

Specific Goals
- Create a calming atmosphere: minimal noise, natural lighting, homelike décor, contrasting tablecloths and plates.
- Utilize a functional seating arrangement to encourage meal intake: small table clusters for those with similar interests/personalities, mixed independence levels, seat options for those with wheelchairs.
- Individualize meal preparation: divided plates for pureed diets, easily identifiable foods, menu options, and adaptive equipment with therapy order.
- Gradual reductions of antipsychotic medication
- Decreased behaviors during meal and activity times
- Improved meal and fluid intakes

Results
The program was fully implemented on January 1, 2017. Our participants are those who eat and attend activities in the dining room throughout the day. There are 23 participants that have been tracked beginning in November.

- Reduction in overall behaviors month over month since implementation.
- Of 23 participants, 19 are currently taking at least one antipsychotic medication. Since the implementation of the complete program in January, 11 participants have experienced favorable dose reductions.

- When reviewing meal intakes from prior to implementation, there has not been any overall improvement in intakes. However, 7 participants showed intake improvement independently.

- Since implementation of the program, there have been no negative reviews on the overall environment of the dining room in our Customer Service surveys.

Highlights
- Created canvas artwork incorporating Fond du Lac landscapes with the residents during activities
- Created picture frame centerpieces with pictures of local landmarks for the residents to reminisce about and trigger memories
- Created mealtime guidelines, such as relaxing music and sequential food delivery
- A mural was designed and painted outside the window of farmland to trigger positive emotions
- Created a Dementia Dining Committee that included activities, nursing, dietary, admissions, family members, and residents

Conclusions
After much extensive work, such as having wallpaper stripped and warm paint colors added, to light filters to reduce eye strain, this project encompassed so many pieces of new research. Also, a popcorn machine and convection oven were added to increase sensory stimulation during mealtime. The overall atmosphere of the dining room is calmer and creates an inviting environment for the residents to eat and socialize. Every specified goal has been met and we strive for future growth and development within this program.

Recommendations
The Dementia Dining Committee selected Olivia and Kim, Activity Aides, to continue the program after May. These are several suggestions for the team moving forward:
- Continue having Dementia Dining Committee meetings with an interdisciplinary group, family members, and residents
- Invite the AIT for 2017-2018 to join the committee
- Involve the Administrator and keep her updated
- Monitor changes in best practices for dementia dining and apply adaptations when new research suggests it

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