

Critical review: Three systematic reviews of three treatments for people with dementia of the Alzheimer type (DAT): Montessori-based interventions (MBI); simulated presence therapy (SimPres); and group reminiscence therapy (RT).

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Reference Center, ERIC, the Social Sciences Citation Index and PubMed.

The search terms for MBI were: Montessori-based activities, Montessori methods, education and principles, Montessori programming and materials, as well as several terms related to dementia and Alzheimer's.

The search terms for SimPres were: Simulated Presence Therapy, SimPres, and several other terms related to dementia, senile dementia and Alzheimer's.

The RT review (Kim, Cleary, Hopper et al. 2006) conducted a search as follows: Medline, CINHALL, HealthSTAR, PsychINFO, EBM Reviews, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, ACP Journal Club, Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effectiveness, Cochrane Controlled Trials Register, AMED and Academic Search Elite. Search terms included: reminiscence, reminiscence therapy, life review dementia of the Alzheimer's type and Alzheimer's disease. Additional hand-searches were also conducted.

In all cases, searches were limited to articles written in English.

Selection Criteria and Data Collection

Mahendra, Hopper, Bayles et al. (2006), (MBI), restricted their inclusion of papers to those which presented original research on Montessori-based interventions for people with DAT, of which the reviewers selected five articles. Descriptive or derivative sources of information were excluded.

Bayles, Kim, Chapman et al. (2006), (SimPres), selected five papers: a description of a feasibility and pilot study, a thesis report of a case study, an article describing an efficacy study, an article on taped memories and related sense of emotional security, and an article describing the perceived effect of SimPres on four individuals with DAT.

Kim, Cleary, Hopper et al.(2006), (RT), excluded all articles which a) did not present a clear diagnosis of DAT in the subjects and b) articles in which "outcome measures did not include assessment of cognitive-linguistic functioning." The reviewers selected six articles which they felt met this criteria.

authors conclude that these three studies, taken together, "...support the positive effects of SimPres on agitated and withdrawn behaviors produced by individuals with moderate to severe DAT." However, they also observe that both the feasibility and pilot studies had no control group, and that the data were largely anecdotal. Furthermore, in the efficacy study, the difference in reduction of anxiety between a placebo tape and the SimPres tape was not found to be statistically significant.

Pooled, the participants across the three studies totaled 90, with 54 of these individuals coming from the efficacy study.

Observed trends in the data were limited to nurses and family members reporting favorable impressions of SimPres.

The authors report that the key outcome measures across these three studies, reduction of agitation and withdrawn behaviors, appear to have been met the majority of the time, as reported in the respective study data; again, however, this data is strictly qualitative in nature and anecdotal. Therefore, one can only conclude that this systematic review

