

Transcript from the Channel 2 News Story on Wednesday, May 19, 2010 at 5:00 PM



CENTERVILLE, OH (WDTN) - A local father-daughter team is breaking barriers to improve the quality of life for the five million Americans living with Alzheimer's and dementia. Here's what you need to know about this first ever type of care.

The 18 residents in the Alzheimer's and dementia unit at St. Leonard in Centerville are usually seen having a good time. At one table, three residents are working on a puzzle, nearby a group is playing cards, and other residents are watching a personal DVD or listening to a CD.

It's certainly not the typical scene at a care facility for dementia and Alzheimer's patients. That's because they're experiencing a first in care. "This is a revolutionary program. And I can say Dayton is at the center of this revolution that will change the way Alzheimer's and dementia care is done around the country if not the world." says Dr. Govind Bharwani with Wright State University. Govind and his daughter Meena spent eight months researching how to improve the quality of life of these patients. Now they're putting their findings to use.

Their first hurdle was to reduce the difficult or agitated behaviors these patients often experience. "We found one of the main reasons for that is because they were bored or disengaged. So we had to get them involved in activities." says Bharwani. To do that, they had to break the barrier of changing from group-only activities to customized, stimulating care for each patient.

The minute a caregiver notices a patient becoming wound up or frustrated, they can head for the resource center for help. It's filled with movies, music, puzzles, games and a box for each resident, filled with personal things they enjoy.

"We looked at every resident and analyzed them and developed their learning curve, developed their personality profile, evaluated their cognitive level." Then a customized action plan was created for each individual. Now caregivers can look at the plan and pick an activity they know the patient will like. "If residents can sleep better because they've had a calmer day, then hopefully their medications can be reduced and potentially eliminated." says Meena Bharwani.

The Bharwanis say they can see the difference in the mood of the patients, but more research is needed to determine if this new care will help stop the progression of the disease.