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Cognitive Stabilization: Validation of The Serper Method™

BACKGROUND:

The Serper Method™ is a system of cognitive exercises designed to stimulate memory and redevelop thought processes (Serper, 2005). It has been shown to have a positive impact on learning, conversation, and socialization of persons affected by early stage Alzheimer's disease (Emerson Lombardo & Lazarus Serper, unpublished).

OBJECTIVE:

The purpose of this IRB approved study was to validate the efficacy of The Serper Method™ with residents (those with and without Alzheimer's disease / dementia) from an assisted living facility.

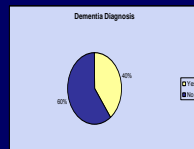
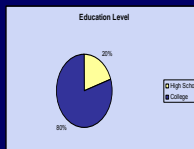
METHODS:

Residents who were interested in participating in this study and who signed an informed consent were given a battery of tests to establish baseline scores. The tests included:

- The Mini Mental State Exam (MMSE) (Folstein, Folstein, & McHugh, 1975),
- The Clock Drawing Test (CDT) (Critchley, 1953),
- The Geriatric Depression Scale (Yesavage, Brink, Rose, et al., 1983) and,
- The Index of Independence in Activities of Daily Living (Katz, Down, Cash, et al., 1970).
- Subjects were exposed to The Serper Method™ in addition to standard activity opportunities

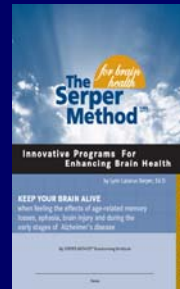
PARTICIPANTS

10 Female, Caucasian residents of a middle Tennessee assisted living facility -- Age Range: 82 – 95 years old ($\mu = 87.5$)



EXCLUSION CRITERIA

- Persons who are clinically unstable in regards to medications.
- Persons with an MMSE score of less than 19.
- Persons with uncontrolled depression or a score of 20 or more on the GDS. Those who score 20 or more on the GDS will be referred to their physicians for treatment as deemed necessary.
- Persons who cannot read or write.
- Persons for whom English is not their first language.



PROCEDURES:

Subjects were exposed to the Serper Method™ as well as the standard activity opportunities:

- Subjects participated two days a week in a structured workbook session with a trained workbook teacher.
- The first day served as a teaching lesson while the second day was a memory stimulation.
- The lessons were conducted in "study groups" of two or three participants.
- They also had the opportunity to practice the Serper Method™ lessons on their own using duplicate worksheets within the workbook.
- Additionally, subjects were aided in using a personal weekly planner to keep track of their individual schedules of activities

RESULTS

- There was a significant difference ($p = .0078$) in scores (pretest – post-test) on the Geriatric Depression Scale. Scores decreased by as many as 4 points over the 13-week trial
- There was a trend toward higher scores on the Clock Drawing Test. Scores increased as many as 7 points over the 13-week trial period.
- The average increase was 1.7 points pretest – post-test

CONCLUSIONS

The Serper Method was found to attenuate subjects' depression scores thereby increasing quality of life.

The significant difference found in depression scores could be the result of socialization. It could also be that the subjects gained confidence as they successfully managed the "non-frustration" design of The Serper Method program. This confidence could have led to a feeling of competence and capability thereby decreasing the level of depression experienced by the subject.

The trend toward higher scores on the clock-drawing test could be the result of visual spatial-relations exercises practiced through a range of Serper Method activities.

ANECDOTAL INFORMATION

Lindsay Heffel was the trained Cognitive Educator™ for The Serper Method study. The following anecdotal information was observed and reported →

➤ The students, many of whom had been reclusive, began participating in residence activities, even bringing pencil and paper so they wouldn't "forget." →

➤ The students became PR persons encouraging more folks to join their "study groups." →

➤ The participants from the "study groups" began meeting on their own in the central area of the residence to work on "Serper" homework, play cards, play board games or just visit.