The Environmental Skill-building Program: A Proven Home-based Occupational Therapy Intervention for Families and Individuals with Dementia

Laura N. Gitlin, Ph.D.
Director, Jefferson Center for Applied Research on Aging and Health
Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia
Laura.gitlin@jefferson.edu

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Translational Research:
- Carter/Johnson & Johnson
- Administration on Aging
- Farber Family Foundation
WHAT IS ESP+?

- **Theory-driven:**
  - Stress process theories
  - Competence-environmental press and environmental vulnerability frameworks

- **Tested using randomized trial methodology:**
  - Community-based families in Philadelphia region
  - Close to 800 families of individuals with mild to moderate/severe dementia

- **Delivered by occupational therapists trained in ESP+ in homes of families**

- **Targets families of individuals with mild to moderate-severe stages of dementia**
Evidence Supporting ESP

Benefits to Individuals with Dementia include:

- Decreased frequency of behavioral occurrences
- Maintain ability to engage in activities of daily living over time

Evidence Supporting ESP

Benefits to Family Caregivers include:

- Enhanced family caregiver skills
  - Communication
  - Use of environmental and task simplification
  - Home safety
- Enhanced caregiver sense of mastery and confidence in managing day-to-day
- Reduced caregiver upset with behaviors
- Reduced burden and depression
- Reduced time spent “on duty” for male caregivers
- Enhanced benefits for females and spouses


Delivery Characteristics

- Home-based
- Up to 10 sessions over 4 to 6 months
- Each session about 60 minutes
- 3 to 5 caregiver-identified problem areas are typically addressed
- Sessions scheduled flexibly based on caregiver needs and training considerations
Common Caregiver Concerns Addressed in ESP

- Resistance to care
- Behavioral symptoms (repetitive vocalizations, shadowing, wandering etc)
- IADL and ADL difficulties
- Mobility limitations and transfers
- Providing meaningful activities
- Caregiver-centered concerns:
  - No time for self
  - Feeling overwhelmed, upset, stressed
  - Need for respite
  - Difficulties coordinating care
  - Difficulties with other family members
  - Balancing care with other family or work responsibilities
Core Treatment Principles

- Client-centered
- Culturally relevant
- Tailored/customized
- Active learning techniques
- Problem-solving oriented

Intervention Components

- **Assessments**
  - Home
    - Safety
    - Supportive features
  - Individuals with dementia
    - Functional ability
    - Activity engagement
    - Behavioral challenges
  - Caregivers
    - Emotional well-being
    - Daily routines
    - Areas of concern
    - Understanding of dementia
  - Communication (dyadic interactions)
Intervention Components

- **Education about dementia**
- **Problem solving:**
  - Problem identification
  - Problem solving and brainstorming strategies
- **Introduction of strategies tailored to caregiver-identified problem area**
  - Communication (removal of negative and practice of positive tactile, verbal and written cueing)
  - Environmental modification
    - low cost adaptive equipment, removal of clutter, rearrangement of physical objects
  - Simplifying everyday activities
  - Activities (pleasant activities graded to abilities)
- **Taking care of self** (Healthy behaviors; Stress reduction)
Caregiver Skill-building

**Customized Action Plan:**
- Introduces four types of strategies
- Treatment goals
- When and how to practice strategies

**Action plan introduced through role play or demonstration:**

**Over time, strategies reinforced, reevaluated, refined**

**ACTION PLAN**

1. Simplify task
2. Communicate
3. Environment
4. Activity
Role of the Physical Environment
Enhancing Way Finding and Decreasing Agitation

Caregiver Concerns:

- Disorientation
- Agitation
- Decreased function
- Trying to leave home
Providing a Calming Environment

Decluttering

• Low demand
• Appropriate level of stimulation
• Comfortable and calming
Visual Cues in the Environment
Reducing Confusion and Dependence

Caregiver Concerns

- Confusion
- Inappropriate dress
- Decreased function
Use of Color Coding

Strategies:

• Color contrast

• Object Placement

• Previous habits

Outcome:

• Increased independence
Visual Cues

White commode on white wall

Disorienting cue

Red duct tape for color contrast
Visual Cue to prevent egress
Enhancing Nutritional Intake and Eating Independence

Case Scenario
• Distractible
• Poor eating
• Fear of malnutrition

First Set of Strategies
• Red placemat
• White plate
• One food item
• Cereal
• Spoon
Use of turban

• Culturally appropriate
• Preservation of role
• Reduce distraction
Enhancing Caregiver Communication Skills

Strategies

- Tactile cueing

- Short 1 to 2 step commands
Simplifying Tasks

Caregiver complaint:
• Back pain
• Unsure how to involve father in dressing

Strategies:
• Verbal cueing
• Lay out clothing in order
• Proper body mechanics
Decreasing Boredom and Agitation

Case Scenario

• CG no time for self
• CR bored, agitated

Strategies

• Preserved role
• Repetitive motion
• Set up objects
• Simplify task
Enhancing Meaningful Engagement
Enhancing Meaningful Engagement

- Control center
- Engagement
- Rail for balance
Mother and Daughter
Communication and Relaxing Rules
Translational Efforts
Who is Using ESP+

- **Fox Geriatric Rehabilitation**
  - For-profit company providing house calls
  - In-home occupational and physical therapy services to older adults
  - Medicare Part B:
    - Physician script for therapy required
    - Safety, functional decline, functional training required

- **Area Agency on Aging in NJ Mercer County (in progress)**
  - National Family Caregiver Program

- **Jefferson Elder Care, Thomas Jefferson University**
  - Medicare Part B
  - Private Pay
  - Foundation sources of support
Delivery of ESP by Fox in Home Care

- Number of OTs trained in ESP = 25
- Number of Caregivers in ESP = 29

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Training in ESP

How are occupational therapists/agencies trained?
- Individuals complete about eight (8) hours of on-line web-based synchronous training and exercises
- Participate in 1 ½ days of face-to-face training at TJU or agency
- Targeted readings to reinforce training
- On-going conference calls, e-mail and web-based support
- Training and licensure fee including need to complete brief documentation of use

What does training consist of?
- Core treatment principles
- Dementia and behavioral symptoms
- Role of physical and social environment
- Family caregiving and its challenges
- ESP specific assessments and protocols
Summary

- ESP+ designed for family caregivers of individuals at mild-moderate-severe stages of dementia.
- Designed to build skills in caregivers to manage a wide range of daily care challenges including taking care of themselves and alleviating stress.

Immutable aspects:
- Delivered by OT trained in ESP.
- Core treatment principles (tailoring, active involvement etc).

Mutable aspects:
- Length of time and number of sessions.
- Pacing of intervention (linked to caregiver readiness).
Contact Information for Training

Catherine V. Piersol, MS, OTR/L, Clinical Director, Jefferson Elder Care

Catherine.piersol@jefferson.edu

215-503-9509