

Assistance Dogs for Dementia

Phil Hazell



Assistance Dogs

Definition

Guide Dogs and Assistance Dogs come under the term Service Dogs. As Service Dogs they enjoy all the legal benefits under the Disability Act

Note that Therapy and Companion dogs are not Assistance Dogs. They have no qualifications and as such are deemed as pets.



Assistance Dogs

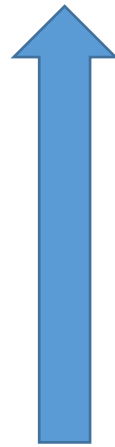
Self Esteem

Purpose in Life

Independence

Freedom

Well-being



Assistance Dogs

Reality Check

- Dedicated commitment to training for two years and ongoing fine tuning
- Management by third party is essential
- Dog must be a family member (sleeps next to the bed)



Assistance Dogs

The main tasks for a Dementia Assistance Dog?

1. Finding articles around the house such as keys, wallets, phones, TV remotes...
2. Keeps you calm in Public Transport such as Taxis, Trains, Ferry's, Commercial flights....
3. Take you home when lost (Short Distance)
4. Identifies you as some one that may need help



Assistance Dogs

- Increased organisational skills
- More independence from family, friends, work place
- Self pride, happiness
- Less stress



Assistance Dogs



This licence provides access to anywhere, except:

- Court
- Zoo
- Operating theatre



Assistance Dogs

When you meet an Assistance Dog don't be afraid to ask the Handler questions such as how does your dog help you?

Don't talk directly to or pat the dog. A young Assistance Dog can easily be distracted.



Assistance Dogs

My NDIS experience:

- Food
- Vet Bills
- Training



Assistance Dogs

Approximate Costs

Subject	Cost of Training per session	Sessions a week	Cost per week	Total weeks	Total Cost per item at 2 years
Puppy Purchase					\$1,500
Training	\$100	3	\$300	96	\$28,800
Vet Costs					\$2,000
Assistance Dog Organisation					\$550
Food			\$42.00	96	\$4,032
					\$36,882



Assistance Dogs

Dog Trainers

- Train the Handler not the dog
- Complete the quarterly assessments
- Third party to manage Public Access Test
- Critical that they have a keen understanding of 'Living Well with Dementia'



Assistance Dogs

Choosing a Puppy or an older Dog

- An eight week old Labrador Retriever is a wee and poo machine. The hassle factor is high but the rewards are outstanding. Ideal time to start the relationship
- An older Dog
 - Toilet Trained
 - Training is slower
 - Some bad habits may be difficult to solve



Assistance Dogs

Summary

- Critical that your Clients phone or email me for:
 - Unbiased information
 - The real Trials and Tribulations
 - Commitment required
 - Catch up so Client can **experience** an Assistance Dog
 - Recent Melbourne trip



Assistance Dogs

Contact

Phil Hazell

- Phone 0467 543 349
- Email goose59@live.com







Assistance Dogs - Improving Quality of Life for People with Younger Onset Dementia & their Families

- Participating organisations: Vision Australia - Seeing Eye Dogs
Alzheimer's Association Vic
The University of Melbourne
 - Funders: Gandel Philanthropy
State Trustees of Victoria
 - Researchers: Professor Keith R. McVilly (keith.mcvilly@unimelb.edu.au)
Dr Genée Marks
-



Main Research Question

Will a **trained dementia assistance dog** help people with **Younger Onset Dementia** sustain **physical and emotional well-being**, and **help them and their partner/carer** to deal effectively with the day-to-day issues associated with dementia?



Significance of the Project

- Rates of dementia are on the rise in Australia, with an average of 243 new people being diagnosed every day. While the vast majority of people with dementia are over 65 years old when diagnosed, people with younger onset dementia comprise around a quarter of a million Australians.
 - There is no cure for dementia. Some medications available assist in the relief of symptoms, but they do not treat the underlying causes of the disease. They have very limited if any effect on delaying the progression of the disease, and their benefits decline as the disease progresses.
 - Our review of the literature revealed very few studies in this area. Most were single case design and poorly constituted (a very weak evidence base). Most were carried out over short periods of time (a few weeks or a few months at most). There was poor evidence of structured training for the dogs. None looked at Younger Onset Dementia. None included consideration of family carers.
-



Methodology

- Multiple case study approach, with longitudinal follow-up.
 - Participants screened for suitability by Seeing Eye Dogs Australia
 - Participants supported by Dementia Australia
 - Multiple interviews per participant and their carers: baseline before placement of the dog; at graduation /after training; at weeks 36-37; and at weeks 62-63
 - Qualitative data, through in-depth questioning at each interview
 - Quantitative data using validated assessments at each interview: well-being, health and the progress of dementia, with data from both people with younger onset dementia, and their carers
-



Participants

People with medically diagnosed dementia, with onset occurring prior to 60 years of age, and of the Alzheimer's type

- N=14: 7 Women; and 7 Men
 - Mean Age on commencement: 61 years, 1 month
 - Carers: 12 partners; and 2 children
 - Location: 8 metropolitan, 3 regional, and 3 rural
-



Dog Training (example)

Task	Behaviour	Benefits to client
Head on lap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog to rest head on client's lap on command from carer ('Rest') • Stays with handler until released 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interrupts anxiety/depression • Carer can command dog to go to client at any time • Stimulates physical interaction and mental connection • Client is not alone, presence of dog staying with client gives confidence
Fetch the carer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client commands dog to find the carer – anywhere inside the house • Dog searches through the house and makes contact with the carer • Dog returns to the client in effort carer will follow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety - If the client has fallen or requires carer's attention, the dog can go fetch the carer and lead him/her back to client • If the client cannot find the carer, gives peace of mind the dog will locate carer
Following	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog follows client throughout the house unless commanded to stay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and safety that the dog is always near the client • Client has sense of confidence moving about the house and grounds independently from carer (gives carer peace and space knowing client is not alone in movements)
Find object	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog will search for particular item and target with nose (mobile, glasses, etc) • Dog will remain in location of item until he/she gets response from handler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpful in locating items in which client may have misplaced. • An exercise between client and dog that can increase engagement, cognitive skills, accomplishment, successful outcomes, independence for client
Stop at kerb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog automatically sits at kerb • Dog stays in sit position until given prompt to continue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cues client to stop and look for traffic • Encourages interaction and connection to the environment; aids safe travel • Stimulates mental processing
Tug and response games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog waits for command to take toy • Dog releases toy on command 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice of speech and cognitive skills; increases use of dexterity and physical movements/coordination; increases sense of independence and satisfaction



Qualitative Outcomes

- People are more confident to stay at home on their own, or go out on short walks on their own (for example, to a local coffee shop), without having to rely on a carer.
- This is important for both carers and person with dementia. Carers report feeling reassured in leaving their family members with dementia alone with their dog at home, or seeing them get out for short walks.

“It's good with him. I can go in, and place my order, and I'll just tell him to sit down. I don't have to worry about chaining him to the table or anything, ‘just sit here and wait’, put the lead down on the ground, and he's good. He'll just stay there. So I'll place my order, I'll come out, have my coffee, and then we'll walk home again, or go up to the bakery up the road up here. I'll get a loaf of bread and do the supermarketing, because he's got his coat on I can go into the supermarket, nobody'll bat an eyelid.”



Qualitative Outcomes

- People with dementia are engaging in exercise and physical activity, through games, walks and excursions that they might have otherwise done prior to having the dog.
 - Often the need of the dog to go for a walk provides important motivation for the person with dementia to go for a walk, and to keep walking where they might otherwise have given up.
-



Qualitative Outcomes

- People with dementia report regaining a sense of responsibility, purpose and pride through the need to look after the daily needs of their dog, and not simply experiencing their life as ‘a recipient of care’.

“Ah well, he doesn’t do special things for me, but I enjoy doing things for him.”

- In addition, the need to learn and rehearse tasks associated with the care of the dog is providing meaningful and intellectually stimulating activities, such as when feeding the dog, grooming the dog, or concentrating when putting on the dog’s harness.

“...and then she blows the whistle, and of course he comes running over and... her face lights up like a Christmas party. It’s empowering. It’s so positively reinforcing”



Qualitative Outcomes

- People report that the care of the dog is providing opportunities to focus on issues ‘outside of themselves’ and their health concerns.
- Some people with dementia have reported that it is easier to show emotions and share feelings with their dogs, rather than ‘burdening’ their carer.

“She walks with me a lot, and she talks with me.... If I’m cross with [my husband]. I will tell her how I feel. She’s just lovely.... Yes! Well, she’s listening, she doesn’t correct me, she doesn’t make noises, but she listens. It helps.”



Qualitative Outcomes

- People report that the dog has brought enjoyment to their life, and provides opportunities to experience pleasure and laughter again.

“He’s, he’s very precious for lots of reasons, and the main one is because he’s a special soul”

“He does bring joy to the household”



Qualitative Outcomes

- People have developed new friendships and involvement in activities with others who have a dementia assistance dog, with the dog emerging as a common (non-clinically related) interest not previously available to them.
- This common focus on having a dog has been particularly important bearing in mind the diversity of people with dementia, and for many the only common interest was their dementia.

“others had really just dropped by the wayside. And part of it, I think it’s a two way thing. You have less in common, and you have less energy. You know you’ve gotta, you’ve really got to nurture relationships, and if you’re not ringing up and checking up on them, they’re going through their stuff too so it just, it just all falls away.”



Qualitative Outcomes

- Carers have observed that the dogs check up on the participants, and maintain a watch, even when they are at rest or asleep.
- The carers feel that they are part of a team, and that the dog is aware of this too. This gives them confidence and security, knowing their family member with dementia is protected and the care of their family member is in some way now shared with the assistance dog.

“a third makes an enormous difference. It feels to me like [the dog] and I share a role, and I’m not entirely on my own with it... Yeah, yeah. Some other thinking being in the household. Someone has a mind. And I’m not the only one that has to have one.”



In conclusion

This program of research has revealed multiple positive benefits of trained assistance dogs for those with Younger Onset Dementia and their families.

- Participants felt safer, more confident and less alone, and were more inclined to be active.
- Carers felt more confident leaving the home and were less worried about their family members being alone, either at home or out and about in the community.
- The value of dementia assistance dogs improving the quality of life for people with Younger Onset Dementia has become much clearer and the evidence base much stronger



Further Information

Professor Keith R. McVilly

keith.mcvilly@unimelb.edu.au