



The menu screen of the CommunicateAid app

her ability to communicate (Bisiani 2014).

Small trials evaluations of the CommunicateAid kit in March 2011 involving aged care residents with dementia, family members and staff, indicated that the tool was relevant and appropriate for people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and assisted people with dementia to communicate their specific needs and feelings. Benefits noted were that people became more settled, happier, more contented and, in some instances, sought interaction with staff who had initiated using the tool. CommunicateAid was also perceived to have helped strengthen relationships between the person with dementia and some care staff.

The CommunicateAid App

Recent research has documented the successful use of touch screen tablets in aged care. Many people are now familiar with new technologies; tablets are being used within the home, hospitals and residential care worldwide. Younger people diagnosed with dementia may already be familiar with tablets and computers and aged care staff are likely to be familiar and comfortable with this technology.

In light of this, and following the success of the printed version of the CommunicateAid Kit, AAWA decided to develop the concept into an application for touch screen technology.

The result is the CommunicateAid App, the first

touch screen Augmentative CommunicateAid designed for people with dementia.

Delegates at the upcoming 2015 Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) conference in Perth (15-18 April) will be able to trial the app for free and it is expected to be available to purchase by July this year.

The development of the CommunicateAid App followed the same criteria as the kit concept. The priority was simplicity and ease of use, as well as making it adaptable enough to reflect each individual's identity, culture and needs. The addition of voice output, an appointments calendar, font-size adjustments and a pain scale to support a person's pain management were also considered important.

Including people with dementia

In 2012 the app project team started working with people with dementia attending the Mary Chester Centre, a day respite service in Perth. We sought their feedback about preferences for image size and colour, background colour, page layout of the category menu and their responses to using the touchscreen. Was it fun to use? Did people find it easy to use the abstract swipe motion to see what's next? Can people see and recognise pictures/illustrations and words, and what was their response to this technology?

The outcomes were both surprising and exciting. The club members enjoyed interacting with the tablets and relatively quickly were intuitively taking over responsibility for operating them. The simple swipe and touch tactile movements appeared to lend themselves well to ease of use by people with dementia.

Following these early trials of tablet use and the medium's

appropriateness as a communication tool, the project team formed a partnership with Central TAFE in Perth. The college was keen for its students to be involved in a real-world project with social benefits, and contributed their expertise free of charge.

Following a presentation by AAWA and a discussion about dementia and the communication difficulties experienced by many people with the condition, the students took on the challenge with great enthusiasm. Sheila developed a story board outlining the steps and concept of the sequencing and content. The TAFE students, under the direction of student lead developer Christopher Fabio, then created the app.

Fortnightly meetings between the AAWA team and the students ensured everyone understood the concept, and feedback from the app centre clients informed the app's continued improvement.

The result is an app that allows users to easily create an individual CommunicateAid on the tablet from set categories, add personal items and photos. With the support of a facilitator, the person with dementia will be able to identify and choose their preferences from photos/illustrations in four categories: drinks, food, I need, and religion. These are then saved, to create their personal CommunicateAid.

While it is a very intuitive and simple process to use the app, training videos and a manual will be available online to help with initial use.

Trialling the app

In March 2014 we began trialling the app at Behan residential care homes in Perth, with three pilot studies to assess ease of use and the impact on the person with dementia, their carer, family members and support staff. These successful trials helped us refine and finalise the app on the Windows and Android platforms.

Conclusion

These trials of CommunicateAid demonstrated how people with dementia can connect using the application.

Relationships can be strengthened, a person's pain can be better identified and managed and they can express their needs, choices and decisions to others. In other words, it is about honouring and respecting the uniqueness of the person.

The CommunicateAid Kit is available through Alzheimer's Australia WA at <https://wa.alzheimers.org.au/research-and-publications/products-for-sale>. For details on the CommunicateAid app visit www.communicateaid.com.au

Individuals or organisations interested in undertaking further research into the use of the CommunicateAid app are invited to contact Sheila Lapping at Sheila.Lapping@alzheimers.org.au.

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Bisiani L (2014) CommunicateAid™ – meeting in the middle. Non-verbal communication within the reality of people living with dementia – a case study approach. Research project report prepared for Alzheimer's Australia WA. View at www.communicateaid.com.au

This article looks at an important and often neglected area of creativity – that of offering opportunities to those with severe communication difficulties.

Playfulness is an essential part of being creative, and I'd like to welcome the chance to focus on two design researchers who are making a real difference to the lives of those with whom they are coming into contact.

Gail Kenning and Cathy Trendway know first-hand the benefits of engaging in life-long creativity and the importance of play and playfulness in the creative process. Gail, a Research Associate at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) in Australia, and Cathy, Professor of Creative Practice at the Centre for Applied Research in Inclusive Art and Design (CARiAD) at Cardiff Metropolitan University in Wales, have both worked as art practitioners for much of their careers, and are collaborating on a series of design research projects that aim to promote playfulness, fun and in the moment joy for people with mid- and late-stage dementia.

Cathy explains: "As children we spontaneously play, create and are playful. It is part of the experience of living and learning and of having fun. However, as we get older we are expected to focus on work, and play is viewed as unimportant or even trivial." She advocates: "We need to give, not only ourselves, but others permission and

Hand i Pockets: playfulness, fun and dementia

This article is one of a series looking at the role of art, in all its forms, in releasing the creative potential of people with dementia. **John Killick** and **Gail Kenning** report on an innovative international design project that promotes fun and joy for people with mid- and late-stage dementia



Dr Gail Kenning (centre) with participants making personalised 'aprons' for people with dementia at the 'funshop' workshop in Wales last year

The creative process

A key factor underlying Gail and Cathy's focus on creative and stimulating play is that people experiencing mental and physical limitations as a result of ageing, and particularly those with conditions such as late-stage dementia, often have nothing to do.

"Opportunities to do productive work have dissipated and opportunities to play and have fun are

disregarded. Many people facing physical or mental limitations as a result of the ageing process and with dementia have fewer and fewer chances to touch, fiddle, feel, experiment, and play," Gail argues.

Gail and Cathy's projects involve making objects for people to play with or simply to interact with in ways that afford comfort or pleasure. Cathy explains: "We particularly want to make things for people with advanced dementia, as this group are often overlooked and

by-passed because of the nature of their perceptual disabilities. While there has been considerable work on design relating to care environments, architecture, interior furnishings, furniture and so on, there has been little focus on making personal things for these people to increase their stimulation and pleasure."

Gail and Cathy are keen that their projects are in keeping with person-centred approaches to care and design – that is, they treat every person as an individual with capacity and possibility (as suggested by Kitwood 1997) and place people and personhood at the centre of their art and design. Their design projects create customised objects for specific people.

The 'funshop'

In June 2014, Cathy organised a collaborative co-design workshop in Wales in the UK in partnership with Gwalia Cŷf, one of the leading providers of residential specialist dementia



Dementia

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