Creating Small Worlds of Home: Sensory Narrative Interventions to Support Dementia Well-Being

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HOMEDEM
Codesigning a home with dementia

This study investigates how scent-based design can be leveraged in dementia care to support the recall of autobiographical memories and promote the preservation of personal identity in patients. Focusing on the concept of "sense of home," the research explores how scent, as a tool in reminiscence therapy, can evoke positive emotional responses and enhance a sense of comfort, safety, and belonging in dementia patients.

Introduction

When do you feel that “this is my home”, and with whom and in what kind of place do you spend time? The word “home” encompasses many aspects, including material structures, spatial dimensions, temporal connections, social relationships, and the processes that make up a home and establish its identity in society (Rijnaard et al., 2016). In this study, we will explore the sense of home, focusing on the fact that scent is an important element in evoking cultural background and memories.

Methodology:

Semi-structured interviews using toolkit:

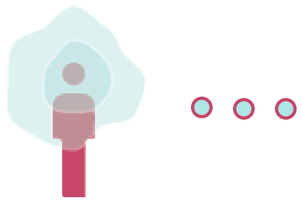
In order to approach the concept of “sense of home” from a variety of perspectives, we selected scents related to the concept of “sense of home” and conducted interviews using these scents. We selected five elements from the various elements of “sense of home” - Eat, Cook, Garden, Place, and Trip - as elements that evoke a sense of home, and selected two scents for each of these five elements.



fig.1 Scent inteview

Home-making through Scent

- **How can we use the scent to feel a sense of home?**
- **What kind of scent can you feel that is your home?**



Personal place: album, photo, personal belonging and objects.



Public place: living room, toilet, activity room, garden



fig.2 Aqua di Rose

sense of home aspect

From review found that three main elements are essential in creating a home and a place of one's own for people with dementia:



Safe space:
Being Physically Safe, Safe space and mobility, Exits and Entrances, Color/Light Manifestations, Linear Arrangement

A small world:
Things Placed Within Easy Reach, Rhythm, Triggering, Personal Belongings, Historical Tangible Elements, Sensory Comfort: Lighting, Radio, Music and Materials, Shapes, Dimensions, and Proportions

Connection:
Communication: Layout and Arrangement, Recreation and Games, Television, Garden

Interview Quote

"The first thing I remember is this smell. It was a big event for my children. At that time, we had a garden at home, and when my children came home in the cold, we made hot chocolate. We often cooked and had dinner together as a small family. As a single mother, those were happy days when we were together."

(Participant, Resident, Interview Recording 00:24:08–00:24:35)



"This smell reminds me of the times I often went to Asian restaurants. I loved looking around at the food stalls and the colorful dishes. I vividly remember smelling this scent and thinking it was wonderful. I've been to Taiwan and Tokyo as well."

(Participant, Resident, Interview Recording 00:25:13–00:25:35)



"I think it's the smell I encountered when getting ready to go skiing. I can't recall its exact name, but it brings back memories of being with my family near a ski resort when I was young. I remember my parents preparing while I played with my sister. It was so nostalgic—seeing that smell made happy memories flood back. The scent of grass, the sun, and the harvest all bring back memories from long ago."

(Participant, Resident, Interview Recording 00:26:01–00:26:35)



Time / Rhythm Design

Designing scents to sustain a sense of home, utilizing fragrance to shape the rhythms of time and daily life. Designing each moment within the home through scent—the rhythm of the day, spaces for reflecting on the past, and spaces for shaping one's future self.

https://www.homedem.eu

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