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WESTERN AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR
HEALTH X AGEING

MEDIA STATEMENT

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DEMENTIA CARE WORKERS RECOGNISED

Successful participants in a dementia education program designed to improve the quality of care for people with dementia in residential care facilities will today be recognised as “Dementia Champions”.

The DIRECT Study dementia education program, developed by researchers at the Western Australian Centre for Health and Ageing, at The University of Western Australia, hopes to improve the care for people with dementia who reside in residential care facilities.

Dr Christopher Beer, DIRECT Study Principal Investigator at WACHA said the awards ceremony represented a significant milestone in the development of improving the quality in dementia care education.

“Residential care facility workers are the unrecognised heroes and heroines of our society,” Dr Beer said.

Rachel Lowry, DIRECT Study coordinator and educator, said workers received little thanks for the marvellous work they did.

“Today we are celebrating and recognising the work of residential care facility by workers awarding all the participants in the DIRECT Study dementia education program with a certificate of appreciation,” she said. “These participants have taken on the role of championing the dementia cause. They are helping to implement best practice in dementia care.”

The DIRECT Study dementia education program emphasises good communication skills and regular interaction when caring for people with dementia. This program aims to improve the experience of the person with dementia and hopefully enhances their quality of life. Eighteen residential care facilities within Perth’s metropolitan area participated in the education program.

Clare Asken, Dementia Champion at Agmaroy Nursing Home in Wilson, said the education program had provided a lot of practical tips on how to deliver the best care for people with dementia.

“I am passionate about providing the best care to our residents, they are like family,” Ms Asken said. “We’ve learned to put the person before for the task.”

“Our educators were brilliant – they were really enthusiastic and knew all about the problems we face on a daily basis. We now have new techniques on how to make our job easier, and at the same time our residents with dementia are more comfortable.”

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“Connecting and communicating with residents with dementia is an important thing to keep in mind when caring for residents with dementia,” says Philippa Wharton, DIRECT Study educator.

There are more than 227,300 people with dementia in Australia and the number is expected to reach 731,000 by 2050. While the risk of dementia increases with age, dementia is not a natural part of ageing. About half the people with moderate to severe dementia live in residential care facilities.*

FURTHER INFORMATION

DIRECT Study background

The premise of Dementia in Residential Care: Education Intervention Trial (DIRECT) study is that those who deliver the care to people with dementia are dementia experts. The DIRECT education program was developed with the residential care staff member in mind; they guided an expert reference group in their development of their education needs and mode of delivery.

*Alzheimer’s Australia Living with Dementia: Dementia Facts and Statistics, March 2008

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