

Dementia Village – A New Concept in Long Term Care

By Kate McCarthy

Currently 35.6 million people have dementia worldwide, and according to the World Health Organization, close to 8 million new cases are diagnosed each year. It is expected that the number of people with dementia will double by 2030 and triple by 2050. According to the Alzheimer's Association, the diagnosis of this disease has increased 68% since 2000 and the cost of caring for those with dementia will increase from \$203 billion in 2013 to a staggering \$1.2 trillion by 2050.



New long-term care option for people with Dementia

The numbers are scary

As the world's population ages, the problem of finding and paying for long-term care is becoming overwhelming. Governments around the world are scrambling to prepare financially and socially for a future full of care issues. Most are not prepared with their infrastructure to accommodate a growing population of elderly, let alone housing for elderly with dementia, which traditionally requires locked down security for safety concerns.

Innovative Care Solution

One innovative care solution, called the Dementia Village, has come out of the Netherlands. Just outside of Amsterdam is a cutting-edge elder care facility named Hogewey. Hogewey is a closed village where people with dementia live, shop, roam and enjoy life freely. The facility is set up with apartments and buildings which form a closed and secure gate to the outside world but opens up internally to its own independent world. The facility has restaurants, cafes, a supermarket, theatre and hair salon, courtyards and gardens, and a pedestrian walkway. It looks and feels like the main street of any town center. The goal of the Dementia Village is to create a world that resembles normal life for the Residents who live there, while maintaining

supervision and safety. The concept of this facility has captured the world's attention and is now being considered as a model by health care experts in several countries.

A Town Tailored To Their Needs

Hogewey has 23 apartments located on a 4 acre grounds. Each apartment holds 6 to 8 people including Caregivers and is decorated in a theme that resembles a lifestyle the Residents once enjoyed. Caregivers, dressed in street clothes, staff the shops, walk through the village and assist Residents whenever needed. The idea is to treat Residents as normal people living in a town tailored to their unique needs so they can avoid the dehumanizing lock-downed security that often is part of dementia care.

A Real Society

Critics compare the Dementia Village to the movie, "The Truman Show," where a man played by Jim Carrey lives his life in a manufactured reality of town which is really a TV set. Hogewey's creators and staff disagree with that comparison, saying their village is a real society and the Residents who live there enjoy a better quality of life than they would in a regular dementia care facility.

As societies prepare for the future, the idea of the Dementia Village is intriguing. The model works in the Netherlands and is a cost efficient way to provide care for that segment of their population. The question is would it work in the US?

Sources:

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