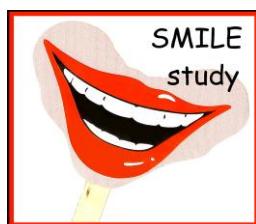


INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE FACILITIES



Sydney Multisite Intervention of LaughterBosses and ElderClowns: Humour therapy in residential aged care

What is the SMILE study?

The SMILE study is evaluating the use of humour therapy in residential aged care facilities (RACF) located in the Sydney region. A total of 36 RACFs will be recruited between 2009 and 2011. The project is being conducted by the *Dementia Collaborative Research Centre* at the University of New South Wales. The Chief Investigators include Professor Henry Brodaty, Dr Lee-Fay Low, Professor Lynn Chenoweth, Associate /Professor Richard Fleming, and Dr Peter Spitzer.

What is humour therapy?

Humour therapy is the art of using humour, smiles and laughter to improve quality of life for people living with physical or mental illness. It is a person-centred, individualised and positive intervention. In the SMILE study, the humour therapy will involve ElderClowns and LaughterBosses.

What is an ElderClown?

ElderClowns are professional performers who are highly experienced in working with people in hospital and residential settings. They are part of the Clown Doctor team trained and supported by *The Humour Foundation*. In the SMILE study, ElderClowns will visit RACFs as "The Elderfield Family" to administer humour therapy. This involves interacting with and entertaining residents in various ways, such as stories, jokes, mime, and song.

What is a LaughterBoss?

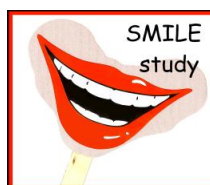
LaughterBosses are not ElderClowns but are RACF staff who have attended a one-day workshop on how to bring humour into daily routines. LaughterBosses from several RACFs will train together at a workshop held in a central location (likely to be on a Friday). With appropriate consultation with RACF management, staff from any background can volunteer for the LaughterBoss role. Personal characteristics which may suggest a good LaughterBoss are: fun-loving, outgoing, enjoys engaging with residents and knows them well, and prepared to try something different!

How will the SMILE study determine whether Humour Therapy works?

The SMILE study is a randomised controlled trial. This means that half of the RACFs are allocated to the humour therapy intervention, and the other half will be allocated to a control group. Each RACF has an equal (50%) chance of being allocated to either group by the study statistician. It is hoped that humour therapy will improve resident quality-of-life and mood, as well as decrease behavioural disturbance and increase engagement. While the research team cannot and does not guarantee or promise that there will be any benefits from participating in this study, the randomised controlled trial is the best scientific method for assessing the potential benefits.

What is the difference between the Intervention and the Control Group?

The *Intervention Group* receives the full humour therapy program: 12 weekly ElderClown visits (2 hours each Wednesday) and training for one staff member as a LaughterBoss. The LaughterBoss should be present when the ElderClown visits so they can work together and build relationships with residents. The *Control Group* receives LaughterBoss training only for two volunteer staff, but no ElderClown visits. LaughterBoss training for the *Control Group* is delayed until all follow-up assessments have finished. Researchers will collect the same information at specific timepoints from all RACFs in the SMILE study, regardless of whether the RACF is allocated to the Intervention or the Control Group.



What sorts of information will be collected?

Trained researchers will complete measures of quality of life and wellbeing for consenting residents. These measures include observing and rating resident behaviour, interviewing residents able to complete an interview, and also interviewing staff who know the resident well. Researchers will also need to access RACF files to collect relevant background information, e.g. medical history. Researchers will visit RACFs three times, staying 2-5 days on each occasion: (1) before the intervention starts, (2) immediately after the humour intervention has finished 12 weeks later, and (3) a follow-up visit after another 14 weeks. For the intervention group only, the ElderClowns and LaughterBosses will record notes about each visit in a 'LaughterChart', which will be stored at RACFs for the study duration (possibly with resident charts).

How will consent from residents be obtained?

Participation requires signed consent from families of residents and residents themselves, if able. RACF staff will post information and consent forms to families, with an invitation to attend an information session at the RACF – and it would help to have an accompanying letter of support for the study from RACF management. To obtain consent for as many residents as possible, RACF staff may need to telephone families who do not respond and seek permission for researchers to contact them directly. In a pilot study, the researchers found that families were interested and enthusiastic about humour therapy and this recruitment strategy ensured consent for more than 90% of residents. *PLEASE NOTE: RACFs will be assigned to either the intervention or control group after consent from all participating units has been obtained.*

Which RACFs can take part in the study?

Both high level and low level residential care facilities in the Sydney area are welcome to participate. More than one unit in the same RACF can take part, provided these units do not share staff (to prevent unwanted transference of the humour therapy intervention). If two high care or two low care units from the same RACF participate, then one would be allocated to the intervention and the other to the control - so it is vital that participating units do not share staff. Units which have a *majority* of non-English speaking residents are probably not suitable, as the researchers will be unable to complete all assessments in languages other than English.

What will it cost RACFs to take part in the study?

The SMILE study is funded by a grant from the *National Health and Medical Research Council*. The ElderClown visits and LaughterBoss training are provided free of charge to RACFs. The study can reimburse an RACF for staff time to attend LaughterBoss training and/or to complete interviews with researchers. The study can also assist RACFs with study-related postage costs. The SMILE study will take a little of management and floor staff time, and lots of goodwill and enthusiasm. We hope that the facility will benefit both from participating in the research study and the humour therapy.

Does this study have ethics approval?

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New South Wales (reference number 08345). If a facility requires additional approval to participate, the research team will work with the RACF staff to obtain this.

Who to contact for further information?

To register interest or to ask questions, please contact Dr Belinda Goodenough at the *Dementia Collaborative Research Centre*, University of New South Wales: telephone:02-93859102 email: b.goodenough@unsw.edu.au