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Reference Materials

Title: **Is Watching Television a Realistic Leisure Option for People with Dementia?**

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Abstract:

Background

Watching television is a common leisure activity, not least among older people. However, watching television may become difficult when it is disturbed by symptoms of dementia.

Method

A total of 284 questionnaires were handed out to relatives of people with dementia in Iceland, in the Memory Clinic of the University Hospital and in specialized units for people with dementia (6 day-care units and 8 units within nursing homes). The response rate was just below 58%.

Results

Watching television was shown to play a less important role in the course of the daily life of people with dementia as soon as the symptoms of the disease became evident, and it increasingly became less relevant. So, this previous leisure activity left an ever-growing void of time to fill. However, watching television may provide an important social context for contact and togetherness during the progress of the disease, as watching television with someone close to them was important for the individuals with dementia.

Conclusion

It is not a viable option for people with dementia to watch television on their own, but they may enjoy watching television while sharing this activity with a person close to them. This may even provide quality time.

Key Words: Social context, Contact, Watching television, Togetherness, Quality time

Conclusion:

Watching television is not a particularly good leisure activity for people with dementia, **unless the content and/or circumstances are tailored to each and every individual.**

Individual assessment has been shown to be crucial in all treatments for people with dementia, and the same appears to be true when choosing leisure activities for a person with dementia – be it watching television, walking, cooking or something else which the person with dementia can share with someone close to him/her. **Sharing an activity may be the crucial factor.**