

## Commentary

### Happiness is Like Medicine: Wisdom for Activities Professionals

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#### Introduction

Wisdom about the mind-body connection is at least as old as the Book of Proverbs. According Proverbs 17:22, positive affect is important for well-being. Thus activities departments, which provide enriched environments for elder-care, are essential.

Activities departments provide emotional support to elderly individuals in care homes, through meaningful experiences such as reminiscence, music, or spiritual care [1]. This echoes the wisdom of Proverbs 17:22 declaring that happiness and joy are like medicine while melancholy causes detriment. Research on palliative care and gerontology confirms the value of positive affect [2].

Finding satisfaction, meaning and purpose in life is inversely associated with pain intensity in individuals with physical disabilities [3,4]. Elements that may help support positive emotions and resilience in the elderly or those with chronic illness include: faith and spirituality, music therapy, social connections, humor, and memory care activities [1,4,5,6,7,8,9,10].

Loneliness is a significant cause of negative affect in homebound seniors and has a detrimental impact on health [11, 12,13]. Part of the solution may be through developments in gerontechnology that are on the horizon [14,15,16]. Inexpensive, easy-to-operate, elder-friendly video conferencing gerontechnology would enable greater connection with family, friends, and healthcare professionals. This could be part of the future of home-care activities programming – which may include social, cognitive, reminiscence, and spiritual activities.

Medical research confirms that emotion influences well-being from the molecular, physiological, and neurological standpoints [17,18,19,20]. This makes activities staff essential members of an elder-care healthcare team.

#### Conflict of Interest Statement

Dr. Celia M. Ross is the founder of the Delaware Gerontology Institute, LLC which provides products for dementia care activities. (For updates check: [www.DEGerontology.com](http://www.DEGerontology.com) )

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