Stimulating memories for patients and their carers

Dr Arlene J. Astell
Dementia Research group
School of Psychology
University of St. Andrews
The problem

• “Perhaps the most devastating consequence of dementia, to both caregivers and patients, is the progressive decline in communicative ability.” (Azuma & Bayles, 1997, p.58)

• People with dementia - affects personhood
• Families - affects relationships
• Care staff - affects development of relationships
CIRCA Guiding principles

- Use technology to find a way round impaired cognitive processes
- Maximise relatively well-retained cognitive processes
- Promote communication and positive interactions between people with dementia and caregivers
CIRCA team

- Arlene Astell & Maggie Ellis
  Psychology, University of St. Andrews
- Norman Alm & Richard Dye
  Applied Computing, University of Dundee
- Gary Gowans & Jim Campbell
  Graphic Design, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art,
- Partners
  - Alzheimer Scotland - Action on Dementia
  - Dundee Social Work Department
Developing CIRCA

- Minimise working memory load, maximise retrieval of remote memories
- Based on reminiscence
- Touch screen
- Multimedia - photographs, songs, video
  - generic stimuli = no ‘right’ answer
Developing CIRCA

• Hypermedia - no ‘right’ place
  - flexibility
• No mouse or keyboard
• No experience necessary
• Create a failure-free experience - not a memory test
Listen to favourite radio themes

The Archers
Desert Island Discs
ITMA
Billy Cotton Band
Housewives’ Choice
Come In
Harry Lauder Medley

Stop and Talk
Touch here to stop music
Sweeping up 1955
Evaluations

• Study 1 - Between participants
• 18 people with dementia, 9 CIRCA, 9 TRAD reminiscence
• Used dyadically with caregiver
• 20-minute sessions
• Video recorded, staff ratings, interviews
• Study 2 - Within participants - 11 people with dementia
Reaction to CIRCA

• from people with dementia:
  • “It takes you back and refreshes your memory”
  • “This covers everything. Good thing this. It’s good to remember things. That’s entertainment!”
Reaction to CIRCA

• Families enjoy seeing their relative achieving things and ‘back to their old selves’
• Staff like CIRCA because it is easy to use - no preparation time
• CIRCA supports successful/positive 1-2-1 sessions
How does CIRCA work?

- Supports caregivers to enable people with dementia to use the system
- Facilitates joint attention between people with dementia and caregivers
- Provides a shared focus and shared activity