

ICPOP COGNITIVE REHABILITATION IN THE COMMUNITY: AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY-LED INITIATIVE

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BACKGROUND

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) is a syndrome defined as cognitive decline greater than expected for an individual's age and education level but that does not interfere notably with activities of daily life. At present there is no Irish data recorded that represents the current prevalence of MCI among the population of individuals aged 65 years and older. International studies completed in America and Norway indicate that the prevalence of MCI in this cohort can range between 0.5%-17.5% and 8.4%-14.8% respectively (Gjora et al, 2021).

The Integrated Care Programme for Older Persons (ICPOP) team strives to acknowledge and support the preference of individuals to remain living in their communities for as long as possible. The Occupational Therapist reviewing community clients identified an unmet need of diminished socialisation and decreasing cognition in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many older people presented with high levels of loneliness, reduced mobility, reduced cognition, higher stress and new health issues requiring medical attention when the ICPOP team assessment took place. These findings were in keeping with the research published by the TILDA study (TILDA., 2021). The occupational therapist and ICPOP team identified that prolonged reduced social contacts and opportunities to leave their homes resulted in reduced levels of cognitive stimulation, low mood and a decline in health. Many older people were continuing to remain at home which resulted in social isolation, under stimulation, low mood and other health effect (TILDA, 2021).

AIM

Our response was to provide a Jog Your Memory Group (JYMG) to provide a cognitive, educational and peer-support based group for community-based clients currently experiencing MCI.

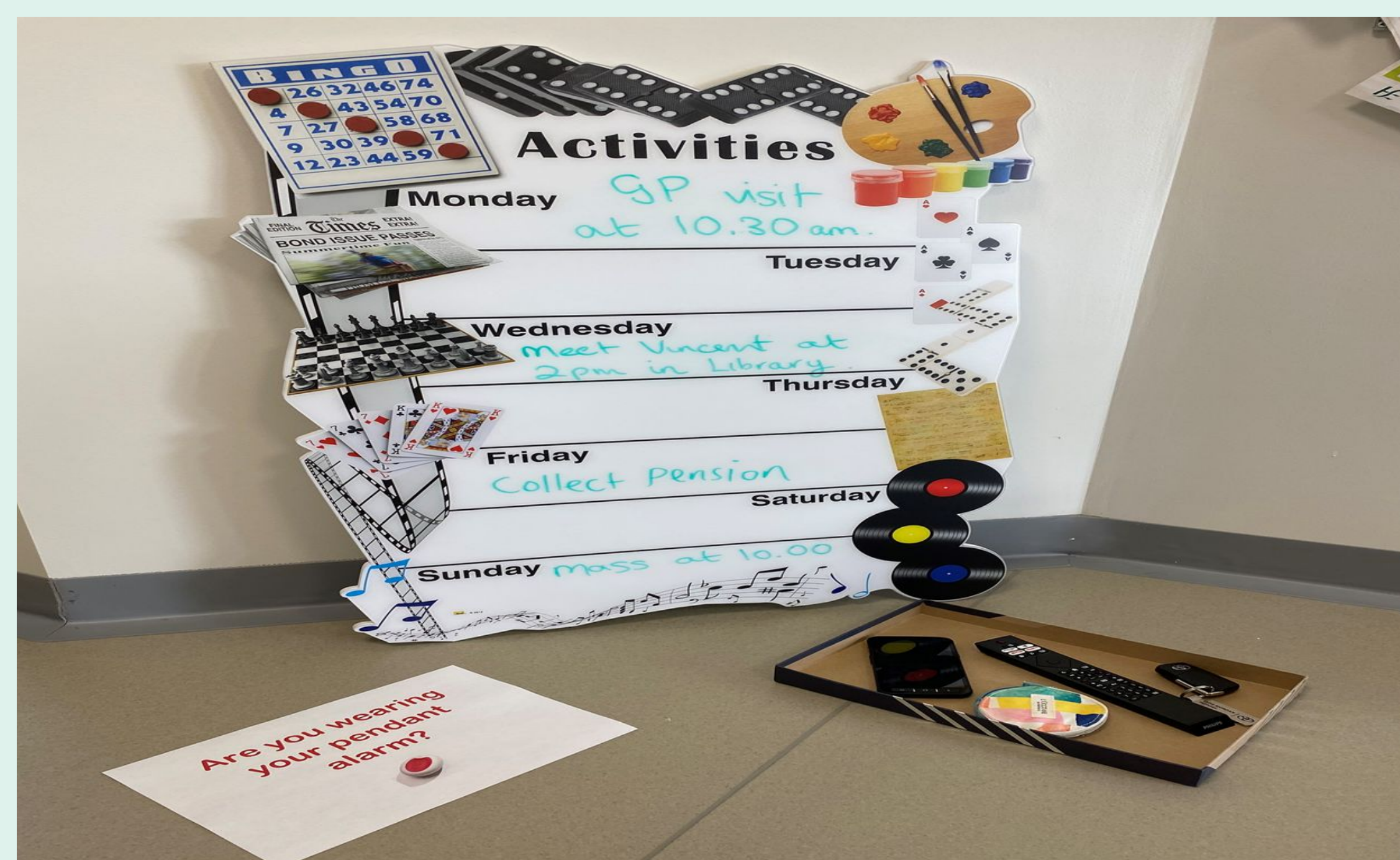
The occupational therapist of ICPOP facilitated a four week memory rehabilitation group programme for community dwelling adults, aimed at providing education on memory processes, compensatory strategies and lifestyle intervention; with the aim of improving client's satisfaction with cognitive processes and their quality of life.

Each session incorporates education, group discussion, activities and goal setting, to provide a broad approach to maintaining or improving functional memory.

For the purposes of tailoring the group to the specific needs of the individuals at any one time (group phase), there was a pre- and post, 1:1 OT and individual interaction to establish cognitive ability, appreciate the occupational performance requirements and preferences of each person, as well as measure the effectiveness of the group in terms of goal attainment and functional cognition at end of group programme. This also assisted the group allocation process by ensuring a good mix of abilities and needs within each group. This is a proof of concept for older persons

OBJECTIVES

- To educate participants on the basis of memory and how positive lifestyle habits promote wellbeing and to draw from existing cognitive reserve
- To demonstrate, practice and promote the use of cognitive strategies for functional memory improvements
- To inspire participants to set meaningful functional goals
- To promote socialisation and peer-support following an extended period of time spent at home



RESULTS

Three cycles of JYMG were facilitated in the past 12 months. A total of 16 individuals participated across the cycles. Subjectively, individual's acknowledged the safe space to openly discuss memory concerns that the JYMG enabled. Weekly comments often referenced shared experiences lessened the fear around experiencing cognitive difficulties. Each week individual goals were set and reflected on at the subsequent group session which assisted accountability and also problem-solving when goals were not attained. At the final 1:1 session between individual and occupational therapist, 27% had improved their cognitive screen score, 66% maintained their cognitive screen score and 7% of participant's cognition had declined. Humour, honesty and family support were mentioned in individual feedback as being important to use both inside and beyond the term of the group.



CONCLUSION

MCI is understood to be a stage in between normal cognition and dementia. Memory rehabilitation groups which provide education on memory processes and strategies to deal with everyday memory problems have proved effective in increasing confidence, improving performance in activities of daily living and memory self-efficacy (Greenaway, Duncan & Smith, 2013; Kinsella et al., 2009). Furthermore, early intervention is thought to be beneficial in assisting clients with mild cognitive impairment in reducing memory failures (Kinsella et al., 2009).

The JYMG was received very positively by the participants and this was reflected in the attendance records across both cycles. Key learnings from the facilitation of this group included the importance of appropriate individual selection to ensure maximal opportunity for participation and potential for benefit. Placing a stronger emphasis on the value behind setting goals each week would have assisted carryover between groups.



REFERENCES

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