



Why Dementia Care Training Matters

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The Pennsylvania nursing home workforce reports high confidence in their ability to care for people with dementia, despite receiving highly variable dementia care training of questionable quality, without proof of competency.

Background

- People living with dementia (PLWD) have complex care needs, requiring different approach to:
 - Activity of daily living assistance
 - Communicating
 - Behavioral symptoms
 - Structuring the day
 - Dementia-appropriate activities, engagement
- These care needs require unique skillset not needed by people without dementia, which means training, skill development, and competency are needed to provide dementia care
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) vaguely requires nursing home staff to receive training to work with PLWD
- **Dementia care training = non-pharmacologic approach** to dementia care challenges

Study Purpose

The purpose of this project was to query direct care nursing home staff about the dementia care training they had received, their satisfaction with their training, and their self-perceived level of preparedness to care for people with dementia.

Methods

- Descriptive study
- 5 nursing homes in south central Pennsylvania, US
- August – October 2025
- Surveyed convenience sample of direct care staff on site using REDCAP on iPads
 - Dementia care training
 - 9-item Confidence in Dementia Scale (CODE)
 - 15-item Sense of Competence in Dementia Care-Staff Scale (SCIDS)
- \$10 gift card at completion

Results

Figure 1a, 1b. Description of dementia care training reported by staff.

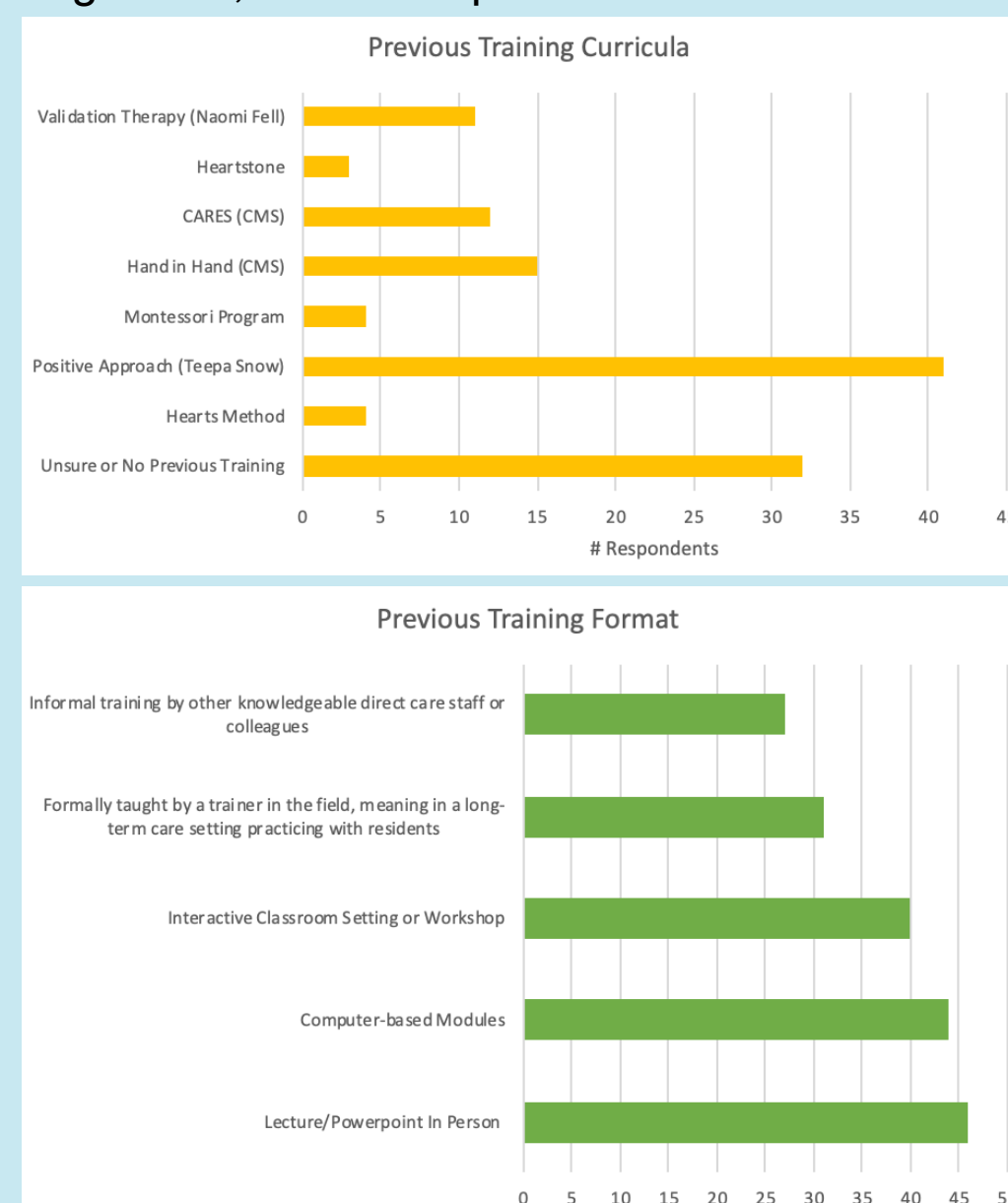
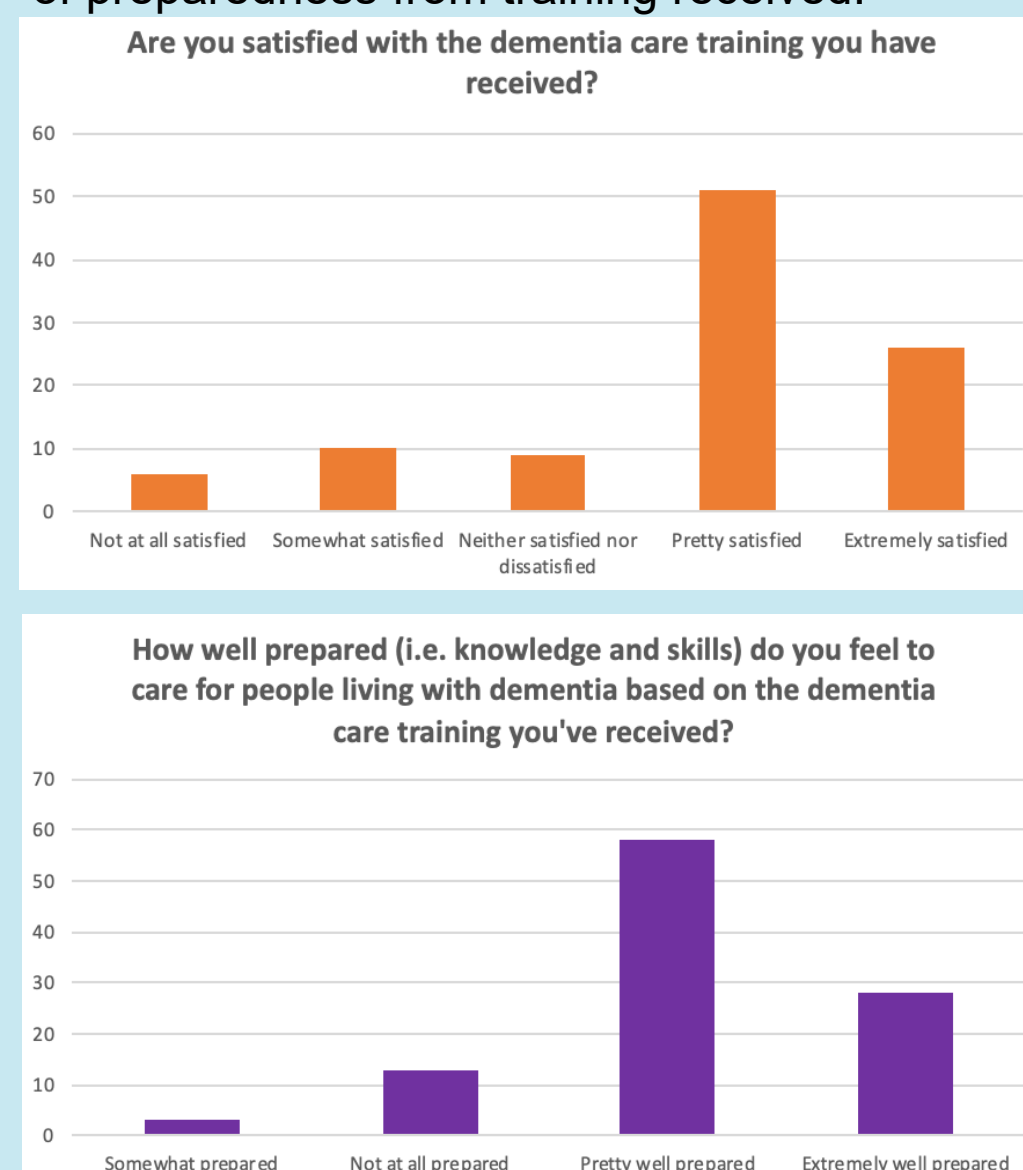


Figure 2a, 2b. Staff satisfaction with and sense of preparedness from training received.



- 102 total participants
 - 45% Certified Nursing Assistants
 - 21% Licensed Practical Nurses
 - 10% Therapy department
 - 7% Registered Nurses
 - 7% Activities coordinators
- Where they received dementia training:
 - 71% by nursing home
 - 2% by staffing agency
 - 15% by nursing home and staffing agency
 - 12% No formal training

Synthesis

- Most common training program: Teepa Snow's Positive Approach™
- >25% counted informal training
- Many received training from multiple programs

Conclusions

- “Having a dementia-competent workforce is critical”²
- We learned that the dementia care training staff received from nursing homes is highly variable, not skills-based, and possibly geared more toward compliance than competence.
- Staff seem over-confident in their ability to care for PLWD.
- It is unclear whether their dementia training affected the care they provided or outcomes such as rate of psychoactive medication use in their facilities.

References

1. Altizer JL, Reckrey JM, et al. The dementia care workforce: essential to care but large research gaps exist. Alzheimer's and Dementia. 2025. DOI: 10.1002/alz.70269.
2. Because We're Human, Too: Why dementia training for care workers matters and how to deliver it. Alzheimer's Society. November 2024.

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