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NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING STUDY FINDS UNIQUE THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITY PRODUCES DRAMATIC RESULTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

- *Study Shows Memory Magic™ Activity Stimulates Elderly in Nursing Homes and Adult Day Care Centers to Socialize, Share Memories, and Smile – and it's also the Highest Rated Activity of Caregivers*
- *Results Prompt Nation's Largest Long-Term Care Provider, Beverly Healthcare, to Initiate Implementation of the Activity Nation-wide.*

AKRON, Ohio – February 14, 2006 – A study funded by the National Institute on Aging has found people with cognitive impairments—Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, stroke, and head trauma—reap measurable benefits from an innovative activity called Memory Magic™. The study found elderly in nursing homes and day care centers who participated in the activity two times per week exhibited more positive behaviors, were significantly more engaged, and demonstrated higher levels of social interaction and more smiling during the Memory Magic™ program than during any other activity traditionally carried out in long-term care or day care centers. Follow-up research has found that the activity made caregivers more comfortable working with people with dementia, and made them want to learn more about the disease.

The activity, involving reminiscing and trivia, allows people with varying degrees of memory loss to enjoy themselves by using their remaining cognitive abilities in a social setting. A single caregiver can conduct the activity for 10-20 participants at a time. Here's how it works: The activity leader holds up a flash card with a clue—the beginning of a sentence or phrase. A selected participant reads the clue out loud. The participants call out the answer to the clue, which may be on their activity board. When they locate the answer on the board, they slide a shade over the word on their board. The activity leader then leads participants into a discussion related to each phrase and clue.

For example, the activity leader might show a flash card that reads: "WINE, WOMEN, and..." and wait for the participants to call out the answer. Once someone announces the answer, "SONG", the participants slide a shade over the word "SONG" on their activity boards, and the activity leader leads a discussion about the question. The leader may ask for words that rhyme with "SONG", for example, or may ask the participants to think of when they might have heard or used that phrase. Because the activity involves abilities and information that were learned when young, and the first abilities learned (such as reading short phrases and words) are the last to fade away, even patients in more advanced stages of dementia can participate.

"We're amazed at how much this activity stimulates memories and gets residents reminiscing," said Nancy Calcott, the Activity Director at Concordia Care (Cleveland, Ohio), one of the day care centers successfully using the activity. "Even residents who don't normally participate in activities take part in this activity. It's so much better than bingo. It really makes them think."

Beverly Healthcare co-sponsored additional research. "We studied this activity so we could see how it compared with standard cognitive activities already being used in our facilities," said Dr. Ed McMahon, Director, Alzheimer's Care and Quality of Life, Beverly Healthcare. "The results speak for themselves. We now want to include Memory Magic™ Activity in all of our Assisted Living Communities, Skilled Nursing Facilities & Dementia Units throughout the country."

The Beverly study compared the number of positive behaviors and interactions (such as directed speech, helping, humor and positive facial expressions) and negative behaviors and interactions (such as arguing, fidgeting, wandering, and sleeping) between residents in a control group and residents in an experimental group. The experimental group participated in the Memory Magic™ Activity for approximately one hour two times per week. The study found significantly more positive behaviors and interactions in the experimental group than in the control group.

The study also measured staff responses to the program. Almost all staff members said the Memory Magic™ Activity exceeded their expectations. They also said it was better than their favorite activity, implying that it is the best activity they are aware of.

The Memory Magic™ program was developed with funding from the National Institute on Aging by Creative Action LLC, a company based in Akron. Dr. Harvey Sterns, a nationally recognized expert in gerontology and Creative Action's Executive Vice President, said he was pleased by the study's results. "We developed the Memory Magic™ Activity to address the challenges faced by people suffering from dementia and their caregivers."

Dr. Sterns, who is a professor of psychology and the director of the Institute for Life-Span Development and Gerontology at The University of Akron, said dementia patients often suffer from under-stimulation and a sense of helplessness, while caregivers struggle to motivate them, especially when working with groups of people with varying levels of cognitive ability. "Because of the way the Memory Magic™ Activity is designed, it can meet many of these challenges, as indicated by the results of the study."

Dr. Sterns added that the activity has benefits beyond stimulating cognitive abilities. Sliding the shades over the words on the activity board exercises motor skills, which helps residents maintain their ability to perform daily tasks.

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Additional information about the NIA and Beverly studies and Memory Magic™ program, including a demonstration of the activity, are available upon request or at www.memorymagic.com