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# Elder care agency offers specialized training in dementia

By  
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Working with patients who have dementia or Alzheimer's disease is one of the toughest parts of the job at Sage Eldercare, an agency serving the elderly in Union, Essex, Morris and Somerset counties, said Deanna Butters, director of the adult day program at Sage.

Case in point: A nurse at Sage met recently with a client suffering from dementia who wasn't feeling well. The client could speak; he just couldn't communicate where his body hurt or how.

Sage recently began administering certified dementia practitioner training to its staffers and volunteers through a grant from the Head Foundation, specifically to deal with situations like these, Butters said. Because of that training, the nurse knew she couldn't rely on the client and instead had to investigate the source of the problem herself.

In the end, the nurse found the man's pulse was worryingly low, Butters said. She encouraged the family to get the problem checked out. The next week, the client was back with a brand new pacemaker.

"You have to be Inspector Gadget" in those situations, Butters said.

Butters is the trainer for the certified dementia practitioner program at Sage, an agency serving about 7,000 older adults and caregivers. The training program consists of an eight-hour course that discusses how to address the unique challenges that arise when working with patients who have Alzheimer's or dementia. Then, those who have completed the training can apply for **official certification** through the National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners.

The strategic plan, Butters said, is for Sage to carve out a niche in the elder care market as dementia specialists.

"We definitely want to use this as a marketing tool," she said. "Families can be assured that Sage is providing training to its frontline caregivers so that local seniors who have dementia receive the best care possible."

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Butters said the agency already has received calls from other institutions and programs that would like to receive training, and Sage eventually would like to offer it to social workers, nurses and nursing homes in the area.

Butters recalled a recent call she received after a Meals On Wheels volunteer tried to deliver food to a woman with dementia. The woman came to the door topless. Her husband had been lying injured on the floor for two days.

The training deals directly with what to do in situations like that, Butters said.

"It works," she said. "People just need to get the information."

Reporter Mary Johnson is [@mjohns422](#) on Twitter.

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