

The 'illogical logic' of memory care

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In recent and sobering reports, experts revealed that an estimated 5.1 million Americans are currently living with Alzheimer's disease.

With those stark statistics on the rise, the administration at Roosevelt Care Centers, two long-term care facilities in Edison and Old Bridge, have taken extensive measures to ensure their residents, suffering with memory and cognitive impairments, are in safe and compassionate hands.

This is accomplished through biennial and on-site classes that focus on the mental and physical declines, as well as the demands that are associated with the disease.

Leaving no staff member untrained, Roosevelt Care Center at Old Bridge's director of nursing, Myrtle Carter, along with her Edison counterpart, director of nursing Joan Karpinski, make certain that every employee coming in contact with residents — from the cleaning crews to the clinical nurses — is routinely and rigorously tested on this material in small-group settings.

"This is meant as both a refresher course and as a means to help our employees expand on their present knowledge," Karpinski said. "This information is constantly being updated by the National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners and also identifies misnomers and tactics for dealing with a debilitating condition that any number of our aging residents are grappling with."

With respect to dementia, Roosevelt Care Center at Edison administrator Dr. Frank Damiani explains that it's technically the loss of mental function, and is moreover the symptoms of a disease, like Alzheimer's, that affects language, judgment, learning, comprehension, reasoning, memory and spatial and visual abilities.

On the other hand, Alzheimer's has definitive stages and has been dubbed "the long goodbye" because of the length of time in which it takes for the disease to take its toll, a residual loss of memory and health.

"For our residents, they're responding normally to what's unfolding in their minds," Carter said. "So our caregivers have to think illogically to respond logically to the situation. It's a

tricky balancing act, because they must do so while maintaining a positive and accepting environment.”

The facility-mandated, eight-hour class covers topics like communications and feelings, paranoia and hallucinations, hygiene and spiritual care and just about everything in between.

“Our job here is to make sure that residents are treated with the highest level of care and the upmost dignity,” said Roosevelt Care Center at Old Bridge administrator Alan Fialka. “In our case, we tailor activities to their needs and even have specialized and secured wings, where we can see to their safety and treatment. Our aim is to give them the best quality of life possible.”

While a patient’s physiological, security, social and self-esteem needs remain a priority, so too does their self-actualization, Carter said.

“By self-actualization, we mean that we are seeing to it that our residents are reaching their highest levels of achievement — that they are functioning at their full capacity,” she added. “Our hope is that by keeping our entire staff abreast on treatment and sensitive to their unique needs, we can achieve that end.”

For more information on Roosevelt Care Centers, visit www.rooseveltcarecenter.com or call 732-360-9839 Roosevelt Care Center is located at 1133 Marlboro Road, Old Bridge, and 118 Parsonage Road, Edison.