



## 2016 | 2017 AWARD RECIPIENT

### GPA LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE IN PERSON-CENTRED CARE



#### THE VALUE OF AN IN-HOUSE GPA CHAMPION!

IT OFFERS DAILY OPPORTUNITIES  
TO FOSTER THE EMOTIONAL AND  
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL BEING  
AND OF STAFF AND RESIDENTS

Registered Practical Nurse, Mary Cochrane, is the BSO Lead, in-house educator and GPA Certified Coach (champion) at Edgewater Gardens, a 64-bed long term care home in the quaint town of Dunnville, Ontario. Mary has noticed an influx of residents with dementia entering the home. “Their range of needs and levels of care require specialized, compassionate and adaptive approaches like GPA,” Mary says. Through her GPA training, Mary knows that most episodes of dementia’s responsive behaviours can be managed safely with GPA’s verbal and environmental de-escalation techniques. She regularly shares GPA knowledge with coworkers.

#### READING THE SIGNS TO GAIN A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF ALEX

Mary told us the story of Alex (*not his real name*). “Alex has dementia with responsive behaviours. He can become frustrated and will throw items

or try to hit staff. When I see his behaviour escalating, I use a particular GPA strategy. I sit down and give him my full attention, smile and reach out my hand. I wait for him to reach for mine. When he does, I speak softly and reassuringly. My facial expression mimics his so that he sees I am noticing and acknowledging his feelings. I let him talk. Eventually, Alex will grow calmer. This GPA approach consistently works well with Alex.” Mary’s coworkers are also having success using this approach with Alex.

GPA teaches us that is critical to understand the person behind the disease in order to successfully care for them. How well do you know the person’s moods, reactions, methods of coping? What is the person like when they are calm? What is their usual behaviour? Knowing a person’s baseline helps us recognize signs of escalating behaviour in order to defuse a situation before it escalates.

#### COMMUNICATION IS KEY: OLIVIA JUST NEEDED TO BE GIVEN THE TIME TO UNDERSTAND STAFF’S DIRECTIONS

Care staff are busy people, pulled in many directions during a day, but sometimes the only solution to a challenging situation is time. Olivia (*not her real name*) often has trouble following direction and is so slow to respond that staff believed she was being resistive. Mary demonstrated to staff how she has success with Olivia using another GPA communication strategy. “I made sure she had her hearing aids in place. I gave her the time

to understand what I am asking her. Sometimes, I had to repeat or show a visual cue before she understood. I reminded staff that before interacting and proceeding with care, it is important to have permission. Olivia must always have the opportunity to say yes or no to what they are offering. If she says no and her facial expression backs this up, it is often best to wait and approach her again later.” Staff have been practicing this strategy with Olivia. Not only is she more settled when they take this approach, but her care needs are being met consistently.

#### OFTEN WE EXPECT PERSONS WITH DEMENTIA TO MAINTAIN A PUBLIC FACE

Do you work in their home, or do they live where you work? It’s a thought-provoking GPA question. Often, we expect persons with dementia to maintain a public face. To the person, however, long term care is now their home, it’s not a public space. We all have a right to express our feelings, particularly when we’re at home. Alex and Olivia must be allowed to express theirs, but guided to do so in a safe and appropriate manner.

“As an organization devoted to a person-centred model of care, Edgewater Gardens has a vested interest in helping *all* staff to be the best they can at identifying residents’ unmet needs in order to reduce catastrophic reactions,” says Mary.

Learn more about Edgewater Gardens ... a 64-bed LTC home with 60 staff and 10 volunteers.