Reflections on the publication of a series of Reminiscence Books for Younger People with Dementia (YPWD)

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Reminiscence Therapy (RT) involves the discussion of past activities, events and experiences with another person or group of people, usually with the aid of tangible prompts such as photographs, household and other familiar items from the past, music and archive sound recordings. Reminiscence therapy is one of the most popular psychosocial interventions in dementia care, and is highly rated by staff and participants. Across studies, reminiscence therapy positively influences patients with dementia and provides them with a sense of overall life satisfaction and coping skills and may also help to ameliorate the symptoms of depression and dementia. However, there is limited literature on the effects of reminiscence therapy in younger people with dementia.

“Life in Pictures” reminiscence books are a new initiative, which should help to provide a useful resource of reminiscence therapy to younger people with dementia and their families.

Background
When I joined Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (BHFT), I was glad to see the enthusiasm with which the local mental health team provide services to younger people with dementia, their families and carers. Some members of the team additionally had set up a charity called Younger People with Dementia, Berkshire West [http://www.ypwd.info/](http://www.ypwd.info/).

The drive to do more for this group of patients by the team led to this innovative idea of reminiscence books. The main aim was to create picture books with relevant text and prompts, which will evoke age appropriate memories using various themes.
I would like to share my experience of how this idea developed into the publication of the first reminiscence book series for younger people with dementia. Our team consisted of professionals who have experience of working with (YPWD) and included a consultant psychiatrist, support worker, occupational therapist, trustee of the charity, and myself. We also had support from the community psychiatric nurse and dementia care advisor for younger people.

Steps involved in the publication of reminiscence books

1. The first step was to write a business plan and to do market research. I utilised some knowledge, which I gained during a module on “Service Improvement” as a part of an MSc in Psychiatric Practice. This was followed by group meetings in which our team determined the themes and content of our first book. We used freeware (Blurb) software to help with design of the virtual book.

2. We secured some funding from a local charity “The Earley Charity”. [http://www.earleycharity.org.uk](http://www.earleycharity.org.uk). Following success in securing funds, the morale of the whole team amplified and we significantly increased our efforts towards publication.

3. We were fortunate to have a brilliant photographer in our team who took pictures according to the themes. Each picture was carefully selected according to the theme and relevant prompts. Feedback on the selection of pictures in the books was taken from a group of patients and carers. Case studies from the patient group on reminiscence were taken into consideration. SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis was done in consultation with the stake holders and highlighted the challenges and benefits of the project.


Here is a comment on the British Seaside reminiscence book for YPWD

“Fascinating and colourful photographs from the seaside are beautifully captured in this reminiscence book “British Seaside”. The photographs represent various activities which people enjoy by the beach. A flip-flop on the page represents additional prompts which are added in the back of book. It takes you from “how to make a perfect sand castle” & “fish and chips” to the
“Seaside special”, the main Saturday night TV viewing in the 1970’s and a number of summer songs”.

**How to use these books**
Most benefit can be gained by using this book in an interactive way so that people could be asked their opinion of the pictures, could be prompted with songs related to the picture or could be encouraged to read the text. In doing so, other memories can be prompted. By asking opinion rather than direct questions, communication and confidence can be improved.

**Feedback**
Many of these books have been sold locally and are being used in various settings such as in peoples own homes, care homes, day centres etc. People of all age groups enjoyed them and the project was regarded as a success. We received positive feedback from carers, as one carer commented “I bought the British Seaside YPWD book just before Christmas, really impressed with it, have looked at it on several occasions over the holiday period with Mr X, including at New Year with some close friends when we ended up ‘You Tubing’ all the song suggestions and having a sing along”

This was such an exciting project for me during my registrar training which not only helped me to boost my skills but also gave me a sense of achievement. I wanted to share this experience as I started as an amateur but developed with the support of the whole team. Now we are on our way to developing a second book in this series!!!

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**Reference**