

Revolutionary Alzheimer's therapy puts St. Leonard in national spotlight

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St. Leonard Franciscan Living Community has garnered two national awards for its newly created Behavior-Based Ergonomics Therapy (BBET) program.

The Centerville-based senior living community has been named a finalist in the first Dorland Health Silver Crown Awards and has also received the 2011 Quality Improvement Award sponsored by the AMDA Foundation and Pfizer.

The Dorland Health Silver Crown Awards recognizes organizations and individuals who provide exceptional services, products and information to the adult and senior community. St. Leonard's BBET program is a finalist for the award's Alzheimer's Care category.

The 2011 Quality Improvement Award is a research award dedicated to encouraging innovative quality programs in long-term care. It is a prestigious national competition and is only awarded to three applicants each year.

Both awards confirm St. Leonard's growing position of excellence in Alzheimer's and dementia care.

"We are very honored to receive both of these recognitions," said Tim Dressman, executive director at St. Leonard. "It was exciting when we launched this program last year because we knew we were pioneering a personalized approach for Alzheimer's and dementia care. The research said it would transform the way we care for and engage our residents, and experience proved it to be true."

The BBET program – created by Wright State University ergonomics professor Dr. Govind Bharwani and his daughter Meena Bharwani – is the first of its kind in the nation. It works by preventing the two main causes of behavioral problems in Alzheimer's and dementia patients: boredom and disengagement.

The therapy program helps reduce cognitive (mental) stress on Alzheimer's/dementia residents by using customized comforting and stimulating interventions. With funding from the St. Leonard Foundation, the Bharwani's created a resource center for the caregivers that provides them the tools required to meet the needs of each resident according to his or her individual learning style, personality and behavior profile, as well as cognitive skill level.

The specialized center is a place where caregivers can go, and within two to three minutes, select the intervention item to help engage a resident or keep them from becoming agitated during peak times of the day. Caregivers are now empowered with tools they know will work and patients are happier, less agitated and more engaged than ever before. Family members, who in the past left

discouraged, are now visiting more often because they have a way to communicate with their loved one.

Since the program's implementation, the community's Alzheimer's and dementia hall has seen incredible results including a 35 percent reduction in falls, a 70 percent decrease in anti-anxiety medication usage, and increased quality of one-on-one time between residents and caregivers.

St. Leonard recently implemented BBET in its Day Away Adult Day Services Program, making it one of the only programs in the Dayton market that will specialize in Alzheimer's care. Meanwhile, the program is catching national attention. Besides this most recent award, Dr. Bharwani continues to share his research at conferences focused on long-term living care.