

The Telegraph

Virtual reality goggles helping dementia patients to unlock memories

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Dolly Godfrey, 105, in VR headset

Care homes are using virtual reality goggles to help people with dementia to unlock memories.

Residents at Tŷ Cwm Ogwr care homes in Bridgend, South Wales, are among those taking part in the pilot, which is part of a “reminiscence therapy” programme being run by the Awen Cultural Trust and Bridgend county borough council.

As part of the scheme, residents have personalised experiences created for them. They include wildlife adventures, garden visits and trips to cities across the world. Research has shown that some dementia patients are able to access memories, triggered by particular places, colours and sounds.

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those who typically use new technology.

Jane Gebbie, a councillor, said: “It has been heartening to hear how these experiences have allowed the residents to reminisce with their families and each other, and enabled them to become more engaged and involved.

“Reminiscence therapy is proving to be [particularly effective for people with dementia](#), and this is a fantastic example of how we can utilise modern technology to help them to [unlock treasured memories](#) and engage with others.”

‘Digital revolution’ in care sector

The project is being funded by a Welsh government grant and has been trialled in the past by the NHS. The Marston Court care home in Oxford, run by The Orders of St John Care Trust, trialled the technology in 2019.

Suffolk county council also announced plans last year to start using virtual reality technology to help elderly people with dementia to recall positive memories. The council allocated £80,000 to the programme.

Beccy Hopfensperger, Suffolk’s cabinet member for adult social care, said: “This initiative is part of [the digital revolution that is happening across the care sector](#) at the moment.

“The virtual reality experience may seem a strange choice to some, but there is a great deal of evidence to support the research demonstrating that residents with dementia who use the technology are able to often access memories and experiences, triggered by particular places, colours and sounds.

“Where it has been used elsewhere, the technology has offered positive outcomes including improving wellbeing, behaviour, and even cognition in some cases. This type of therapy also supports inter-generational shared experiences between older and younger family members.”

The [use of VR in treating neurologic and psychiatric disorders](#) has been gaining prominence in recent years. The technology has also been used on patients suffering from depression and PTSD as well as those suffering from specific phobias.

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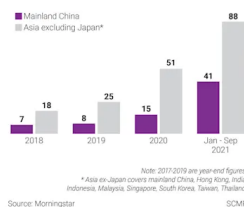
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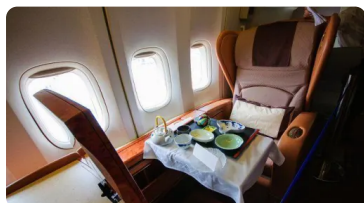
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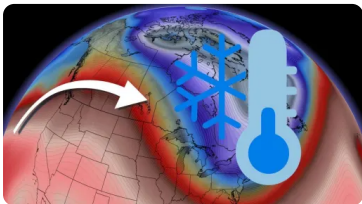
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