

# GPA Research & Evaluation



Innovative research demonstrating the impact of GPA education on dementia care practices and outcomes.

At Advanced Gerontological Education (AGE), we recognize that meaningful, high-quality research and evaluation of our Gentle Persuasive Approaches (GPA) education programs are essential to advancing care for older adults.

As a national organization committed to enhancing the care of older adults living with dementia, we understand that education must be informed by evidence, and that ongoing evaluation ensures our programs are meeting the diverse and evolving needs of those who live and work in care environments.

We prioritize the evaluation of GPA's efficacy both to demonstrate its impact on care and to support its adaptation across a variety of care contexts and populations.

Our research efforts include collecting quantitative and qualitative data from participants, care teams, and organizations to measure outcomes such as knowledge acquisition, confidence in care delivery, and improvement in quality of life for people living with dementia. These insights guide the evolution of GPA, ensuring it remains responsive to the needs of our partners.

Through our national research efforts, AGE continues to build a robust evidence base that supports the continued development and dissemination of GPA. Ultimately, our goal is to ensure that all older adults across Canada benefit from compassionate, respectful, and effective dementia care.



Dr. Victoria McLelland, PhD  
Director of Research & Quality

Evaluations of GPA have been completed across multiple sectors:

LONG-TERM  
CARE

ACUTE  
CARE

POST-  
SECONDARY  
EDUCATION

# GPA Basics Education Improves Staff Self-Efficacy and Knowledge in a Post-Acute Care Rehabilitation Hospital: A Quality Improvement Project



Many patients in rehabilitation hospitals across Canada are living with dementia. These patients often have unique needs, but hospital staff typically receive very little formal training on how to support people living with dementia who show responsive behaviours.



To help close this gap, staff at a post-acute rehabilitation hospital took part in the GPA Basics dementia education program. 88 staff members attended GPA classroom sessions and completed surveys before and after the education. We looked at changes in their confidence and knowledge about dementia care.

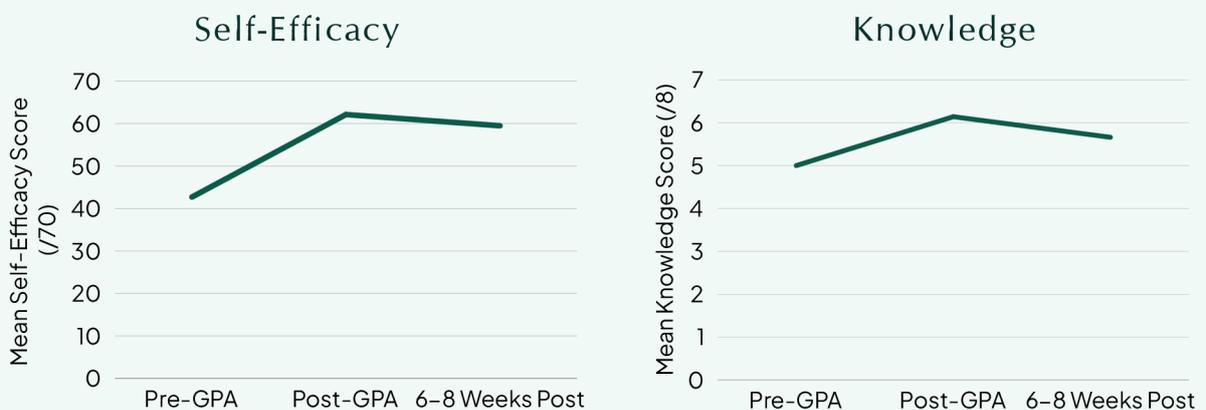
After completing GPA, staff felt more confident and knowledgeable in how to care for people with dementia. These improvements lasted even six to eight weeks after the training.

Staff also reported that they could better understand the reasons behind certain behaviours and felt more skilled in using gentle, effective strategies to respond. They had previously relied upon basic strategies that were often focused on regulating their own emotions. Six to eight weeks after GPA education sessions, participants could instead relate patient responsive behaviours to unmet needs that needed to be addressed. Participants then reported successful application of personalized non-pharmacological approaches with confidence and skill at the point of care.

GPA dementia education improved staff capacity to provide compassionate and effective care to individuals with dementia.

## Staff Self-Efficacy and Knowledge of Person-Centred Approaches to Responsive Behaviour

After attending GPA sessions, participants showed significant improvements in both self-efficacy and knowledge scores relative to baseline. At six to eight weeks post-intervention, significant improvements in self-efficacy were sustained.



Alidina, K., McLelland, V., & Schindel Martin, L. (2026). Gentle Persuasive Approaches dementia education improves staff self-efficacy and knowledge in a post-acute care hospital: A quality improvement project. *Nursing Open*. doi: 10.1002/nop2.70473

# Implementing Gentle Persuasive Approaches Dementia Education for Staff on In-Patient Medicine Units: A Program Evaluation

When older adults living with dementia are hospitalized, they can find the hospital environment to be confusing, fast-paced, and distressing, which can lead to responsive behaviours. Staff struggle to support patients living with dementia and responsive behaviours without specific education.

We aimed to enhance staff knowledge and confidence when caring for older adults with dementia and responsive behaviours on medicine units at a Canadian hospital. GPA eLearning was disseminated to 82 staff participants as part of a broader quality improvement project. GPA encourages staff to reframe responsive behaviours as self-protective expressions of unmet needs and learn to assess their meaning.

Immediately after GPA, participants showed significant increases relative to baseline in dementia care self-efficacy, competence, and knowledge. Self-efficacy scores increased further eight weeks post-GPA, suggesting that the opportunity to apply newly-learned approaches further increased staff confidence.

Before GPA, few participants described dementia-specific strategies for de-escalating responsive behaviour. Eight weeks post-GPA, participants described application of tailored, person-centred, non-pharmacological interventions and successful use of GPA strategies. GPA eLearning strengthened staff preparedness to interact with older adults experiencing responsive behaviours, thus enhancing their care.



Crandall, J., Coatsworth-Puspoky, R., Schlegel, K., Beker, L., McLelland, V.C., & Schindel Martin, L. (2022). Implementing Gentle Persuasive Approaches dementia education for staff on in-patient medicine units: A program evaluation. *Dementia*, 21(4), 1173-1199. doi: 10.1177/14713012211070148

## Staff Self-Efficacy, Competence, and Knowledge of Person-Centred Approaches to Responsive Behaviour

After completing GPA eLearning, participants showed significant improvements in self-efficacy, competence, and knowledge scores relative to baseline. At six to eight weeks post-intervention, significant improvements in all three measures were sustained.



# An Education Intervention to Enhance Staff Self-Efficacy to Provide Dementia Care in an Acute Care Hospital in Canada: A Nonrandomized Controlled Study

GPA Basics was implemented with staff in seven clinical areas at one of the sites of a large academic teaching hospital in Ontario. The study involved two groups: 1) an intervention group (468 staff members from one hospital site who attended GPA Basics sessions), and 2) a wait-listed Group (277 staff members from another site who did not receive immediate education and served as a comparison group).

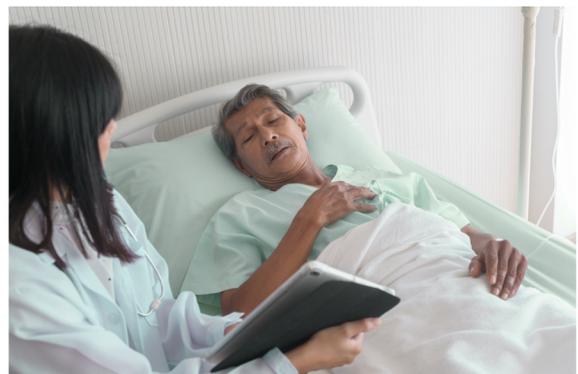
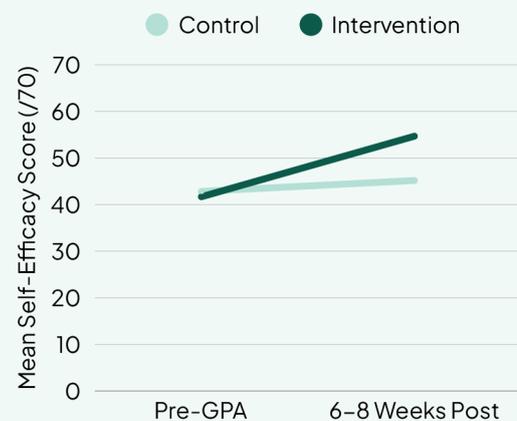
Participants completed a quantitative measure of dementia care self-efficacy at three time points: 1) immediately before GPA Basics, 2) immediately after GPA Basics, and 3) six to eight weeks after GPA Basics. At these same time points, participants also provided responses to written, open-ended questions about their experiences and usual approaches to responsive behaviour. A subset of 20 participants also attended focus group discussions eight weeks after their GPA sessions.

Staff who attended GPA Basics sessions showed significant quantitative improvements, relative to baseline scores, in their self-efficacy for caring for people living with dementia and responsive behaviours. This improvement was sustained even eight weeks after the education sessions. Qualitative findings showed that GPA-educated staff adopted more person-centered approaches, focusing on understanding and responding to the individual needs of people living with dementia.

In contrast, the wait-listed group (who had not yet attended GPA sessions) did not show any significant changes in self-efficacy or care practices during the study period, and at the post-intervention time point were continuing to report the use of physical and chemical restraints to reduce harm or risk related to responsive behaviours.

## Staff Self-Efficacy in Person-Centred Dementia Care

After GPA Basics, staff participants showed significant improvements in quantitative measures of self-efficacy ( $p < .001$ ) in supporting people living with dementia and responsive behaviours.



Schindel Martin, L., Gillies, L., Coker, E., Pizzacalla, A., Montemuro, M., Suva, G., & McLelland V. (2016). An education intervention to enhance staff self-efficacy to provide dementia care in an acute care hospital in Canada: A nonrandomized controlled study. *American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease & Other Dementias*, 31(8), 664-677. doi: 10.1177/1533317516668574



## GPA Bathing: An Online Dementia Education Program Enhancing Bathing Care in Ontario Long-Term Care Homes

In 2024, AGE conducted a small-scale implementation of its new GPA Bathing® program in three Ontario long-term care homes. This pilot program aimed to enhance dementia care by equipping personal support workers and care staff with evidence-informed best practice approaches to prevent and de-escalate responsive behaviours during bathing and personal care.

104 staff participants completed six GPA Bathing units and pre- and post-intervention quantitative measures of bathing self-efficacy and knowledge.

Pre-GPA Bathing, participants often encountered behavioural escalation while assisting residents with bathing and felt fear, frustration, incompetence, and guilt during these episodes.

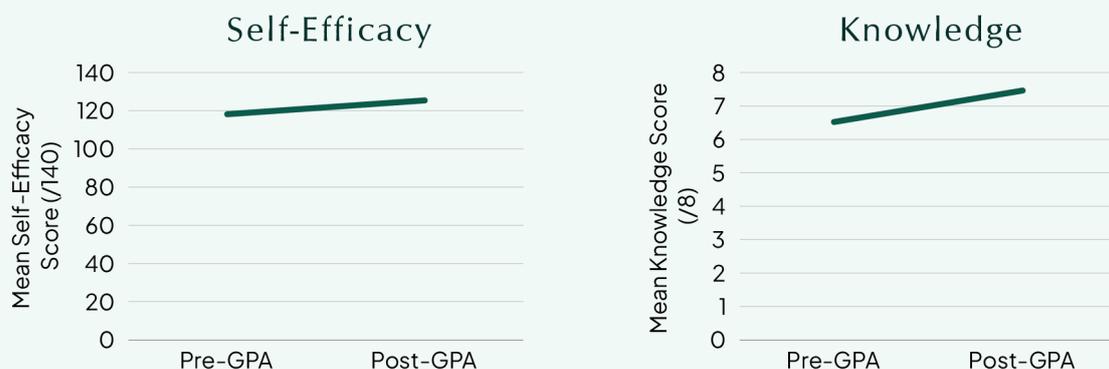
Participants' baseline approaches followed general principles of person-centred care but often lacked specific and purposeful bathing interventions.

After GPA Bathing, participants reported increased confidence and described specific, actionable approaches they planned to use in future, including bathing histories, documentation tools, bathing adaptations, towel bath kits, personalized props, and increased family involvement.

The GPA Bathing program's person-centred, evidence-based, and practical strategies have the potential to significantly improve the quality of bathing care for people living with dementia.

### Staff Self-Efficacy and Knowledge of Bathing Best Practice

After GPA Bathing, staff participants showed significant improvements in quantitative measures of self-efficacy ( $p < .001$ ) and knowledge ( $p < .001$ ) of bathing in the context of dementia.



McLelland, V., Schindel Martin, L., Wang, A., Wauchope, L., Gomes, M., Mouriopoulos, O. (in preparation). GPA Bathing: An online dementia education program enhancing bathing care in three Ontario long-term care homes.

# Increasing Nursing Students' Self-Efficacy in Dementia Care Via GPA Bathing, an Online Bathing Education Program: A Quasi-Experimental Pre-Post Design

Bathing assistance is associated with physical and emotional challenges for both care partners and people living with dementia, making it one of the most complex activities of daily living to support. Nursing students typically receive little or no formal training in dementia-specific bathing competencies, leaving them unprepared when providing this care.

To address this gap, three GPA Bathing® eLearning units were embedded in a senior-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing course at Toronto Metropolitan University. A total of 517 students completed the units, and 384 provided pre- and post-intervention quantitative and qualitative data on bathing self-efficacy.

Pre-intervention, students reported fear, incompetence, and uncertainty when faced with responsive behaviours and described only basic, non-specific strategies.

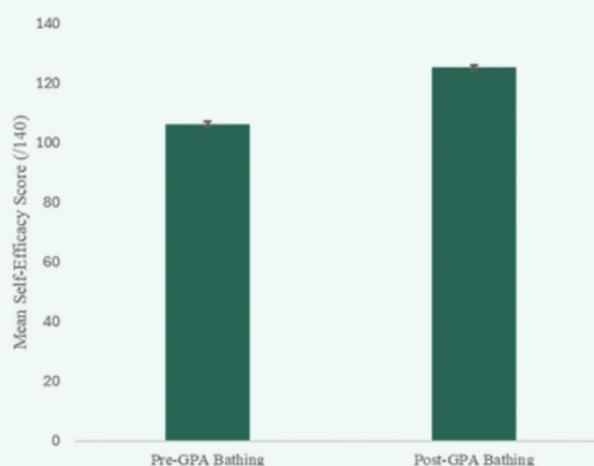
Post-intervention, students described greater confidence and could name specific, evidence-informed competencies such as creating individualized bathing care plans, using personalized items or props, applying GPA "Stop & Go" technique, and involving family members in bathing routines. Participants were highly satisfied with all aspects of the GPA Bathing units.

Finding indicate that GPA Bathing equips nursing students with greater confidence and practical person-centred strategies for dementia-specific bathing care. The study highlights the importance of integrating dementia-specific education across all years of undergraduate nursing programs to build and reinforce students' entry-to-practice competencies in gerontological care.



## Nursing Students' Self-Efficacy in Dementia-Specific Bathing Care

After GPA Bathing, staff participants showed significant improvements in quantitative measures of self-efficacy ( $p < .001$ ) in supporting people living with dementia and responsive behaviours.



Wang, A.H., McLelland, V.C., & Schindel Martin, L. (2025). Increasing nursing students' self-efficacy in dementia care via GPA Bathing, an online bathing education program: A quasi-experimental pre-post design. *Journal of Nursing Education & Practice*, 15(10), 17-28. doi: [10.63564/jnep.v15n10p17](https://doi.org/10.63564/jnep.v15n10p17)

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