15 OTs Receive Training in New Intervention For Caregivers

by Mimi Jacobs, PT, GCS, OCS, Executive Director of Fox GERI

In July 2007, Fox Rehab, Fox GERI and The Center for Applied Research on Aging and Health (CARAH) at Thomas Jefferson University formalized a relationship with the goal of advancing the field of Occupational Therapy in the realm of dementia caregiving. In October 2007 we were awarded a grant from the Rosalynn Carter Institute and Johnson & Johnson. The purpose of these grant awards is to support innovative partnerships between researchers and practitioners to implement evidence-based programs to enhance the well-being of family caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease or related disorders. The grant allows CARAH to translate its tested caregiver intervention programs for use by Fox Rehabilitation clinicians, who will be trained to assess the needs and concerns of family caregivers and to teach caregivers knowledge and specific skills to manage daily caregiving challenges in order to reduce their own stress and improve the well-being of the dementia patient.

Dr. Gitlin lecturing to the group

Breakout sessions with personalized instruction in groups of 2 with Dr. Gitlin and Ms. Vause-Earland

On February 29 and March 1, 2008, fifteen Occupational Therapists received extensive training in the "Environmental Skill Building Program" for caregivers of people with dementia living in the home. The training was conducted by Laura Gitlin, PhD and Tracey Vause-Earland, OTR/L from CARAH. Dr. Gitlin is a nationally recognized researcher with over 15 years of experience in dementia research. This is phase 1 of a multi-year, multi-phase program. We anticipate training additional therapists in additional territories in the future.

Group photo with Dr. Gitlin and Ms. Vause-Earland

Fox Rehabilitation and CARAH share Johnson & Johnson and RCI's mission to bridge the gap between academia and home-based practice by translating dementia research into services and training for patients and their caregivers. Dr. Gitlin states: "The training will enhance the skill set of OTs and PTs who interact with families dealing with dementia and enable them to provide CARAH's systematic and proven program to enhance caregiver well-being along with their ability to care for their family member with dementia. If this pilot program is successful, our (Occupational Therapist-based) caregiving training program has the potential to impact families across the country."