

Using a Book Chat to Improve Attitudes and Perceptions of LTC Staff About Dementia

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Background

- Considering the high rates of residents with dementia in long-term care (LTC), research is needed to explore creative training approaches to enhance staff's knowledge about and attitudes toward dementia in order to provide high quality care and to ensure a good work experience.
- A book club may be useful for staff who care for individuals with dementia as it provides the structure to finish the book and allows participants to have a conversation that aims to enhance knowledge and attitudes about dementia care (Arends, Frick, Smith & Treinkman, 2007).
- Objective:** To evaluate a book chat intervention based on Lisa Genova's novel *Still Alice* in order to build empathy and understanding in LTC staff when caring for people with dementia.

Methods

STUDY DESIGN

- Posttest-only with a comparison group
- Both groups completed a survey which included the Approaches to Dementia Questionnaire (ADQ; Lintern et al., 2001) and open-ended questions
- Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (version 20) and qualitative data using thematic content analysis

SAMPLE

- Book chat participants: 4 PSWs, 1RPN, 1 RN, 1 Administrator, 1 Life Enrichment, 1 Social Worker, 2 Others
- Control group: 3 PSWs, 1 RN, 2 Administrators, 1 Life Enrichment, 1 Support Services, 2 Others
- All of the book chat participants were female compared to 80% in the control group
- 64% of participants and 60% of controls were over the age of 46
- 82% of participants and 80% of controls had specialized training in dementia

Findings

SCORES FROM THE ADQ

	Intervention	Comparison Group	t	p-value
ADQ Scores	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
Hope subscale	31.6 (3.34)	26.5 (8.42)	1.78	0.09
Person-centered subscale	51.7 (2.67)	46.4 (5.56)	2.72	*0.01
Total score	82.67 (3.67)	72.9 (12.53)	2.25	*0.04

- *p < 0.05
- Note: Higher scores indicate more positive attitudes

ANALYSIS OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

- The novel gave participants a first-hand glimpse of Alice's struggles and the opportunity to follow her emotional journey throughout the disease process
- Real-life challenges faced by the main character of the novel influenced participants' perceptions of the disease
- Novel had an effect on the participants' perceptions of family involvement in relation to dementia care
- Participants described a gain in knowledge from reading *Still Alice*. Participants felt they had a better understanding of the disease process, as well as the personal experience, which translated into improvements in their care practice.
- Participants described specific techniques they plan to use in their future care of residents with dementia that they learned from reading the novel
- Participants gained a greater appreciation for the concept of personhood

Participant Quotes

GREATER INSIGHT INTO THE EMOTIONAL JOURNEY OF DEMENTIA

"I have a better idea of how the person with dementia is feeling. How frustrated the person must feel."—PSW

PERCEPTION OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

"I have learned to be less judgmental of the family situation."—PSW

IMPACT ON PRACTICE

"More insight into the mind and knowledge of the fears has helped me in my practice."—RN

"I learned slower is faster with people with dementia."—PSW

VALUE OF PERSONHOOD

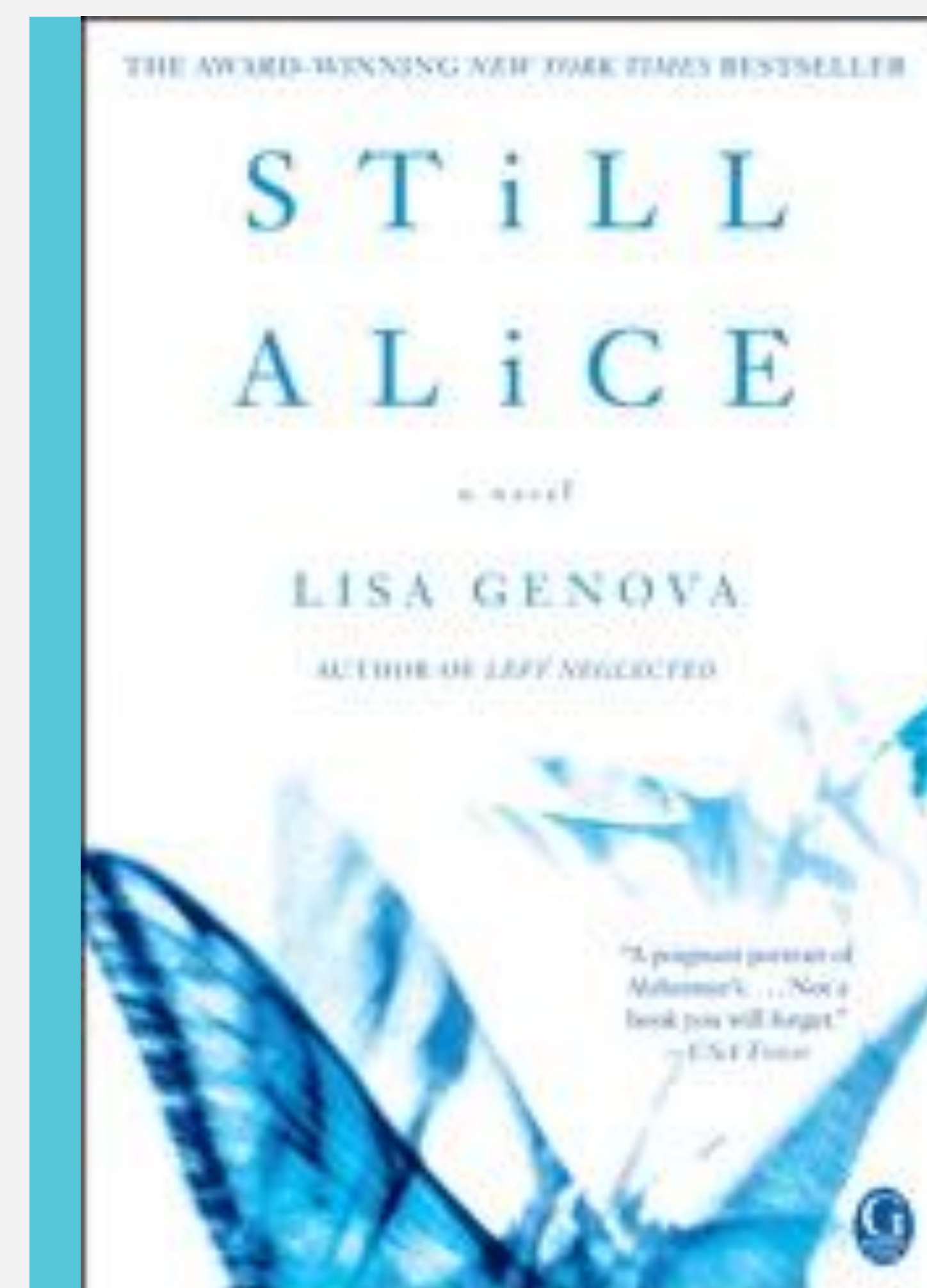
"I try hard to get to know the person, not the dementia. It has made me look at the family and life before."—PSW

Conclusions

- A book chat creates an environment to discuss, learn and share experiences.
- Holding a book chat is a creative approach to allow staff the opportunity to reflect on the care given to residents with dementia.
- By creating innovative learning opportunities, knowledge about dementia care may greatly benefit staff, family, and residents.

References

- Arends, D., Frick, S., Smith, P., & Treinkman, A. (2007). The Rush Alzheimer's Disease center book club: Creative staff development over literature and lattes. *Alzheimer's Care Quarterly*, 8(2): 163-165.
- Genova, L. (2009). *Still Alice*. New York: Pocket Books.
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"*Still Alice*" is a compelling novel about a 50-year-old woman's sudden descent into early onset Alzheimer's disease.

