

Bridging Cultures and the Digital Divide: Culturally Adapted Engagement in Advanced Dementia Care During COVID-19

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BACKGROUND

- **COVID-19 closures** disrupted memory day centre services for older immigrants living with advanced dementia.
- A **culturally adapted Zoom programme** was developed to preserve connection, routine, and cultural identity.
- Evidence for virtual interventions in advanced dementia remains **limited**.

RESEARCH AIM

To explore how a culturally adapted, Validation-informed Zoom programme supported social connection, identity, and engagement among older immigrants living with advanced dementia during COVID-19.

METHODS

- Psychosocial Zoom programme for older immigrants living with advanced dementia
- Validation Method and CAM4 Cultural Adaptation Framework
- Music, movement, storytelling, rituals, and first-language communication
- Focused ethnography with reflexive thematic analysis



Illustration generated to represent the study setting; no actual participants are depicted.

Culture and the Validation Group Method enabled people living with advanced dementia to remain socially connected, express personhood, and experience belonging—even through a screen.

CAM4 CULTURAL ADAPTATION FRAMEWORK

Context: Music, rituals and familiar objects

Context: First language and familiar routines

Engagement: Caregiver-supported participation

Fidelity: Validation Group techniques with Validation teacher

WHAT WE FOUND

SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT

Humour • Attention • Reciprocity

VIRTUAL VALIDATION

Validation Group Techniques translated successfully to Zoom

PERSONHOOD

Culture and shared rituals strengthened identity and recognition

PRACTITIONER ROLE

Cultural Competence and Validation facilitation were essential

Technology became a bridge—not a barrier—to connection, cultural identity, and belonging.

PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

- **Feasibility:** Culturally adapted virtual engagement can meaningfully engage people living with advanced dementia.
- **Inclusion:** Digital dementia care can extend to populations often excluded from virtual interventions.
- **Implementation:** Skilled practitioners and caregiver support are essential for successful engagement.

