

# South Bend facility sheds light on potential dementia breakthrough

By Kasey Chronis | Updated: Wed 8:37 PM, Feb 17, 2016

South Bend's Memorial Epworth Center is shedding light on a potential breakthrough in the treatment of dementia.



Researchers are conducting a study at MorningView Assisted Living Center to measure whether intense light therapy affects a dementia patient's overall well-being.

The care facility is the only one in the Midwest to take part in this research; the other six are located on the East Coast.

The study was coordinated by the Lighting Research Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic [Institute](#) [↗](#) in New York.

Since patients with dementia have countless nights with little to no sleep, researchers are testing to see if high levels of light during the day will help a patient's sleep pattern, mood and memory.

"Some of them pictures haven't been seen since they've been put together. Never looked at 'em until these two guys got me started on them, and I remember a lot of things...where I was and what we done," said John Stahly, study participant.

Stahly is nearing completion of the 12-week study.

"It's very impressive, he's 95 years old and seems to have a fantastic memory and is really lively, but he does have some lapses," said Ishaan Dixit, research coordinator.

Notre Dame research [students](#) visit Stahly and the facility's three other study participants every day to collect data.

"With a lot of dementia residents, during night time, they spend 40-percent of their time awake," said Roger Ringenberg, [Administrator](#), MorningView.

"The whole purpose of the study is to see what we call entrainment of the circadian rhythm, regulating that cycle so people can sleep at night and be awake the daytime would help with mood, with daily activities," said Dr. Suhayl Nasr, Psychiatry Medical Director, Beacon Health System. 

When finished, participants will have spent the first four weeks using the lights, the second session with no light and the third with light again.

"These are not light bulbs you can buy in the store, you need the special lighting and the special intensity of light that we know can change the rhythm of the brain for sleep and wakefulness cycle," said Nasr.

Having already seen improvements, MorningView's administrator says he's confident in the research.

"And that might be the way we build [nursing](#) homes having more light, it'll have, I think, a profound effect," said Ringenberg.

Based on the results of the study, researchers will decide whether it will continue, and which hospitals and facilities in the nation could benefit from participating.

So far, the impression is that dementia patients have improved from light therapy; however, data from all participating facilities needs to be analyzed before results can be determined.

---

*Comments are posted from viewers like you and do not always reflect the views of this station.*

0 Comments

WNDU

 Login ▾

 Recommend

 Share

Sort by Best ▾



Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

 Subscribe

 Add Disqus to your site [Add Disqus](#) [Add](#)

 Privacy