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## **Dementia Care/Education**

*“Walking With Dementia” is the designation for a learning tool designed to improve a caregiver’s ability to understand at a deeper level the meaning behind another’s cognitive deficits and daily challenges. Using special equipment or props, and ten simulated episodes that approximate dementia-like experiences, participants gain insight into the myriad disabilities and deficits associated with dementia.*

*By Christine Ross, R.N., B.Sc.N., M.N.*

# **Gaining insight into the realities of dementia**

***“Walking With Dementia” - a learning tool for caregivers that provides experiential insight into the realities of dementia symptoms***

The “boomers” are coming is a mantra that dominates almost all discussions concerning the care of the elderly. In fact, for stake holders and decision-makers in the field of nursing home care, this mantra is an eye-opener to the diverse resources that will be required to meet the needs of the elderly efficiently and effectively - particularly for those suffering a dementia.

### **Projected increases**

The number of people diagnosed with dementia is projected to increase dramatically. Currently in Canada, it is estimated that over 365,000 people have Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia. Approximately half are cared for in nursing homes, the ma-

jority of whom are in the moderate or late stages of the disease.

According to the Ontario Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care (2004), there are approximately 4,400 people in the Durham Region of Ontario (with a population of 507,000) that currently have some type of dementia. Within this region (one hour Northeast of Toronto), by the year 2011, it is projected that the number of people with a dementia will increase dramatically.

### **Complex care issues**

As the number of people with dementia increase, it will be imperative for those providing service in nursing homes to have an arsenal of skills and resources to deal with the

complex issues that lead to challenging and difficult behaviours.

In 1997, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care implemented a provincial-wide training strategy to enhance the ability of long-term care staff to meet the care requirements of individuals with complex physical and cognitive/mental health needs with associated behavioural issues.

### **Educational strategies**

A major part of this strategy was the Alzheimer’s Education Initiative called “Putting the P.I.E.C.E.S. Together.” Since its inception, thousands of regulated care providers have passed through the P.I.E.C.E.S.™ program (see **box next page**). To support