



BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS FOR OLDER ADULTS

There are an estimated 850,000 people living with dementia in the UK (Alzheimer's Society, 2020). The use of applied behaviour analysis to improve the lives of ageing adults or people living with dementia is termed 'behavioural gerontology'. There is a small but promising and growing body of research on behavioural gerontology. The evidence shows that ABA can be useful for understanding and decreasing behaviours that challenge (e.g., sundowning, wandering, vocalisations), teaching people new skills to help reduce the impact of lost skills or cognitive decline, and to help people with communication difficulties express what they like. The focus of behavioural gerontology is on understanding how the ageing process (typical or atypical) changes how people interact with their environment, and how the environment can be enhanced to improve quality of life. Behaviour analysts working in this field may work within or alongside multidisciplinary teams (e.g., physiotherapists, clinical psychologists) and in care homes, nursing homes, hospitals, or in the community.

EXAMPLES OF UK-BASED RESEARCH

Gallagher, S., & Keenan, M. (2006). Gerontology and applied social technology. *European Journal of Behavior Analysis*, 7(1), 77-86.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15021149.2006.11434265>

Sharp, R. A., Williams, E., Rörnes, R., Lau, C. Y., & Lamers, C. (2019). Lounge Layout to Facilitate Communication and Engagement in People with Dementia. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 12(3), 637-642. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6743525/>

KEY RESOURCES & PUBLICATIONS

Lucock, Z. R., Sharp, R. A., & Jones, R. S. (2018). Behavior-Analytic Approaches to Working with People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities who Develop Dementia: a Review of the Literature. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 1-10

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6411549/>

Skinner, B. F., & Vaughan, M. E. (1997). *Enjoy old age: A practical guide*. WW Norton & Company.

<https://www.amazon.com/Enjoy-Old-Age-Practical-1997-08-17/dp/B01K3NZ724>

Trahan, M. A., Kahng, S., Fisher, A. B., & Hausman, N. L. (2011). Behavior-analytic research on dementia in older adults. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 44(3), 687-691.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3177357/>