

Alzheimer's – What remains?

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'What remains?' is a design research project contributing to a larger investigation into how game elements can be used as motivational triggers to stimulate Alzheimer patients.

The severe health condition caused by Alzheimer's disease wears away the ability to speak, move or even eat. The difficulties in communication and understanding between elderly Alzheimer patients, care givers and elderly relatives, provokes a deep state of anxiety and aggression in the elderly's everyday life. Furthermore, Alzheimer patients regress together with their memory, and past events become their present reality.

By instigating a collaboration with a social enterprise specialized in the field of dementia care, support has been created for a more in-depth cooperation between designers, patients, caregivers and elderly with Alzheimer's relatives.

The research has been conducted from the starting point of observing patients' daily life in care homes. This approach stimulated a necessity to investigate new methodologies capable of supporting a communication with patients. Interviews with caretakers, and especially with the elderly's relatives, worked as a base onto which the patients' life stories could be constructed, through pictures and other information.

The elderly's memories became the connection through which designers could communicate with the elderly in face-to-face dialogues. Personal pictures and photos of everyday objects were perceived by each patient as a translation of their thoughts. This approach was not only fundamental for

the designers, stimulating interaction with the patients, but it also provided caretakers and the relatives with a new understanding of the reasons behind specific behaviors of the patient.

As a result, this research approach has ended in a story telling game tool that helps caretakers and elderly's family members to constructively interact with this disease. This new tool can therefore be considered as an alphabet that generates images to support the work of caretakers and elderly relatives.

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