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# **The Ezer Mizion Center for Younger Dementia Patients A Formative Evaluation Study**

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# Abstract

## Background

Fewer than 2% of all dementia patients are under the age of 65. According to the literature, the needs of younger dementia patients differ significantly from those of their older counterparts. Nevertheless, few settings are currently offered to younger dementia patients – one of them being the Tzipora Frid Center in Petach Tikva, run by the Ezer Mizion Association. The center includes a therapeutic club for younger men with dementia, who experience the initial and intermediate stages of that condition. The club began operating in March 2020 and is now the only one of its kind for younger patients. Club activities are held twice a week, for a nominal participation fee. At the time of study – during the COVID-19 pandemic – only eight men participated in club activities, their number restricted due to social distancing regulations. Representatives of the Tzipora Frid Center contacted the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute for a formative evaluation study of its activities.

## Objective

Examine the needs of younger dementia patients in a variety of areas of life and the solutions provided to them by the center from their own and their family members' perspectives.

## Method

The study was based on three sources of information: (1) *Ten in-depth interviews* with club participants and their families; (2) *Analysis of intake questionnaires* completed by the family caregivers – the questionnaire's focus was the assistance provided by the family members, and the latter's emotional condition; and (3) *Observation* of club activities, the interaction with the staff and other participants, and physical conditions.

## Results

The study indicates that the therapeutic club is important and necessary for both the dementia patients and the family caregivers. Participating in club events serves as an anchor in their lives and a source of support. It provides interest and pleasure, cultivates a sense of belonging and peer-group identity, and enhances a sense of value and competence. Together with reports on the high satisfaction with the activities and staff, the interviewees also raised challenges related to the relatively narrow scope of activity (two days only) and the center's relatively

remote location. In addition, they raised difficulties currently faced by the family members alone, who at this point do not have any additional assistance.

## **Recommendations**

The findings point to the need to develop additional and dedicated services for younger dementia patients and their families. We recommend expanding the existing services to other cities, particularly given the club's impressive successes and the multiple challenges facing patients and their family members. Finally, we recommend a continued study of this population in order to optimize the services offered to them and their families.