



## KEY POINT SUMMARY

### OBJECTIVES

This study evaluated the impact of environmental modifications on participants' ability to find their bedrooms in a special care unit (SCU). Researchers placed photographs of residents from early adulthood and a large sign with a sentence with residents' names near their rooms.

### DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

Displaying photographs and attaching signs to a doors is a low-cost and simple intervention that appears to increase the probability that older adults with severe Alzheimer's disease will successfully locating their nursing home bedrooms.

## Using External Memory Aids to Increase Room Finding by Older Adults With Dementia

Nolan, B. A., Mathews, R. M., Harrison, M.

2001 | *American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias*  
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### Key Concepts/Context

Memory deficits are commonly experienced by seniors with Alzheimer's disease and dementia. Disorientation is a memory-related skill deficit that leads to reduced mobility and inhibits independence. Further, it is upsetting for residents when they can't find their rooms and often repeatedly ask staff to help them. Some research suggests that display cases with the residents' personal memorabilia can help those with moderately severe dementia locate their rooms.

### Methods

Three SCU residents with Alzheimer's disease participated in the study. Researchers observed the residents to assess their ability to locate their rooms. Researchers used a multiple-baseline design across subjects to evaluate the effect of a photograph and sign on room finding. They taped laminated yellow cards (approximately 30 cm by 2.5 cm), with a statement indicating who lived in the room, on participants' doors (e.g., "This is Mary's room.") The statement was printed in a 65-point Arial font, although one sign was printed in a 150-point font to accommodate one participant's visual impairment. In addition, researchers attached participants' portraits (enlarged to 12.7 cm by 17.78 cm) to the back of memory boxes. They also taped separate laminated yellow cards (approximately 10 cm by 2.5 cm), with the participant's name printed in a 65-point Arial font next to the portraits.

### Findings

The researchers reported that the baseline performance of room finding was low (M = 34%) for all three participants. Mrs. A found her room 24% of the time, Mrs. B,



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52%, and Mrs. C 26%. However, all three participants improved during the intervention phase (M = 85%). Mrs. A found her room 80% of the time during the intervention, a 56% increase from baseline. Mrs. B found her room 100% of the time during the intervention for a 48% increase from baseline. Mrs. C found her room 75% of the time during the intervention, which was a 49% increase from baseline. Thus, the researchers found that there was over a 50% mean increase in participants' ability to locate their rooms following the intervention.

### Limitations

Authors identified no limitations of the study.