



Society for American Baseball Research

Baseball Reminiscence Chartered Community

PROPOSAL
to develop and implement a
BASEBALL REMINISCENCE RESEARCH STUDY

Version 1 January 7, 2021
Version 2 January 21, 2021

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this proposal is to further the acceptance and widespread adoption of baseball reminiscence programs as an effective means to enhance the quality-of-life of people dealing with Alzheimer's & dementia, chronic illnesses, and loneliness & isolation.

Through personal experiences and significant anecdotal evidence, as well as high retention rates in SABR-led programs, there is ample qualitative data that "baseball reminiscence works!" A comprehensive study to develop quantitative data about the benefits of baseball reminiscence programming would provide further evidence as to the value of these programs. With study results in hand, even more doors will open to the opportunities to participate in baseball reminiscence programming. SABR program leaders will be able to use the study results to enlist more local sponsor organizations and thereby engage more participants and their caregivers, seek attractive national partnerships, and recruit more volunteers. (A stakeholder flowchart is attached under References.)

SABR strives to be the essential community for the world of baseball through its global membership, inclusive events and all-encompassing research. SABR is the logical organization to support this important baseball research effort.

BACKGROUND

Reminiscence therapy is a widely used intervention to help enhance the quality-of-life of those dealing with dementia and Alzheimer's¹. It is also being more widely adopted to help alleviate feelings of loneliness & depression brought on by extended isolation or chronic illness.

Reminiscence therapy seeks to invoke participants' pleasant memories of the past, engage them in discussion, and reconnect them to a supportive and like-minded community.

Sports is an engaging subject that is well suited as a topic for reminiscence. Sports reminiscence was first embraced by advocates and health authorities in Scotland. Currently, Scotland has over 300 reminiscence programs nationally, covering multiple popular sports such as soccer, golf, rugby and shinty, as well as popular culture topics such as music and cinema memories.

The first baseball reminiscence program in the U.S. was the Cardinals Reminiscence League³ (CRL), modeled on the Scottish programs. Begun in 2011, this was a joint effort by the Alzheimer's Association, St. Louis University, the Veteran's Administration, and the St. Louis Cardinals museum and charitable foundation.

Beginning in 2015, SABR volunteers in Austin, Texas began offering a baseball reminiscence program based on the CRL model. SABR-led programs have since expanded to multiple sites in Texas, Los Angeles, and Westchester County, N.Y. In 2020, the SABR board of directors endorsed this effort by formalizing a Baseball Reminiscence Chartered Community. This group now acts as the driving force to promote the widespread adoption of baseball reminiscence programs.

Two research reports were issued on the original CRL baseball program^{4,5}. Both studies reported positive results in terms of the feasibility of baseball reminiscence offerings, of improvement in participants' engagement and enjoyment, plus willingness of all parties to continue the programs. They also stressed the need for a more controlled study with more participants over a longer timeframe.

Researchers at Clemson University planned and executed a quasi-experimental study using Clemson collegiate football as the reminiscence topic⁶. In addition to affirming the findings from the CRL studies, the Clemson study was able to report quantitative data on improvement in quality-of-life measurements (an overall improvement of 18% that was statistically significant). A small improvement in cognition measurements was also reported (5%), although the authors cautioned as to the significance of this finding due to the small sample size and inability to control outside influences. The authors stressed the need for more research, and also the extension of the research beyond Alzheimer's/dementia subjects to include older adults experiencing loneliness or social isolation.

STUDY APPROACH

SABR can provide the number of programs and participants, plus the longevity, to conduct a larger-scale study of the effectiveness of sports reminiscence programming. Pre-pandemic, SABR members were facilitating nine programs, some of which dated back to 2015. Since the creation of the SABR Baseball Reminiscence Chartered Community, at least six chapters are pursuing new programs. Over time, this will provide a significant base of programs, participants, caregivers, and volunteers for study.

We envision focal points for a study of SABR baseball reminiscence to be:

- Gather quality-of-life data from participants and caregivers. We are especially interested in how reminiscence programs affect human perceptions of well-being.
- Gather qualitative data from volunteers.
- Use existing, validated measurement tools.
- Gather both quantitative data for measurement of effectiveness and qualitative data for evaluation and program improvements.
- Be able to include participants with varying lengths of exposure to our programs (we will have participants that are brand new to the program, as well as those with 5+ years participation).
- Be able to include both Alzheimer's/dementia participants as well as other adult participants (isolated, long-term disabilities, institutionalized).
- Measurement needs to be easy-to-administer and minimally intrusive.
- We need to be able to re-sample periodically so as to support longitudinal evaluation (for example, possibly every-two-years).

Respectfully submitted,

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REFERENCES

1. Woods, Bob et.al. “Reminiscence therapy for dementia” 2005
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15846613/>
2. Video overview of Cardinals Reminiscence league: <https://youtu.be/fTWnufi95P4>
3. Wingbermuehle, Cheryl et.al. “Baseball reminiscence league: a model for supporting persons with dementia”, Journal of the American Medical Directors Association, 2014
4. Tumosa, Nina “Baseball Reminiscence Therapy for Cognitively Impaired Veterans”, Federal Practitioner, 2015
5. Hawkins, Brent et.al. “Creating Football Memory Teams: Development and Evaluation of a Football-Themed Reminiscence Therapy Program”, Therapeutic Recreation Journal, 2020

SABR Baseball Reminiscence

Research Proposal Attachment – Stakeholder Flowchart

