



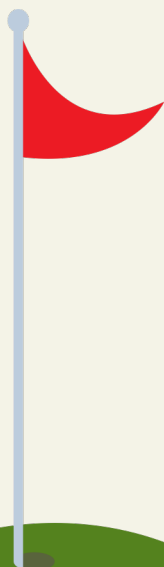
**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY**  
FACULTY OF KINESIOLOGY  
Relationships and Exercise Lab

# FORE! THE LOVE OF GOLF SUMMARY REPORT



In 2024, the City of Calgary offered an inclusive golf program at a public golf course, *Fore! The Love of Golf* (FTLOG), for individuals with dementia and their care partners to engage in together. The program aimed to provide individuals with dementia and their care partners an opportunity to participate in golf activities that promote positive well-being and address the specific challenges they face. The FTLOG program included an orientation session, followed by five weeks of golf lessons with a golf professional, then six weeks of free-play on the golf course.

We conducted a study looking at participants' experiences in and the benefits of the FTLOG program. We were interested in the social, cognitive, and mental health benefits of the program, as well as its contribution as an inclusive space for those living with dementia.



# Participant characteristics

	Golfers	Care partners
Age	Average = 74.67 years Range = 68 -79 years	Average = 72.33 years Range = 61-81 years
Ethnicity	White = 5 Asian = 1	White = 5 Asian = 1
Employment	Retired = 6	Retired = 4 Employed part-time = 1 Other = 1

## Golfers

### Mood

Golfers scored an average of 16.17 (range = 3-26), indicating mild depressive symptoms. On this measure, 0-9 is considered normal, 10-19 indicates mild depressive symptoms, and 20-30 indicates severe symptoms.

### Blood pressure and heart rate

Golfers' average blood pressure was 119/72 mmHg (range = 101-137/58-86), and their average heart rate was 61 bpm (range = 52-71), all within normal limits.

### Cognitive function

On a scale where higher scores reflect greater cognitive function impairment, golfers' average cognitive function score was 58.20 (range = 43-85), indicating moderate impairment. Individual scores ranged from mild to severe.

### Behaviour

Out of 12 behavioural symptoms associated with dementia, golfers exhibited 4.5 behaviours on average (range = 0-10). Care partners rated both the severity of these behaviours and the distress they caused, with higher scores indicating greater severity and distress. On a 0-36 scale for severity, the average score was 9 (range = 3-24), indicating low severity. On a 0-60 scale for distress, the average score was 14 (range = 6-30), indicating low distress.

## Care partners

### Mood

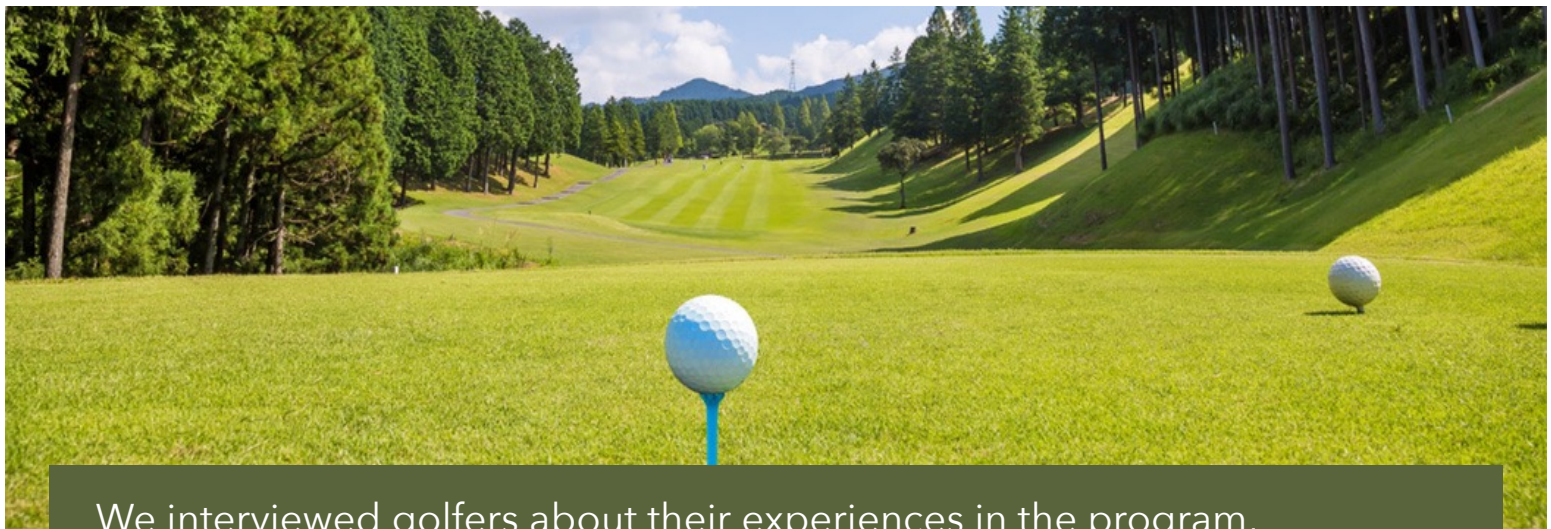
A score of 16 or higher indicates mild or significant depressive symptoms. Care partners' average score was 15.17 out of 60 (range = 1-34), slightly below this threshold.

### Care partner burden

On a scale where higher scores indicate greater burden (0-10 = none to mild, 10-20 = mild to moderate, >20 = high), participants averaged 35.83 (range = 7-56), suggesting a high level of burden.

## Take Home Message

On average, golfers had moderate cognitive impairments, and care partners were experiencing mild to moderate burden. These findings suggest that people caring for individuals with dementia in this range may find this program accessible and feasible for them.



We interviewed golfers about their experiences in the program, perceptions of the inclusivity of the golf course and program for people with dementia, and what they liked and disliked about the program.

## Research Aim

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Explore the lived experiences of individuals with dementia in an inclusive golf program, FTLOG.

## Methods

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Qualitative interviews were conducted with 6 men with dementia who participated in the golf program.

## Results

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Three participants, either directly or via their care partners, expressed general satisfaction with the program, but could not speak more in-depth about their experience. The results presented focus on the stories of the three participants who provided in-depth data.

### **Will I be up to par?**

The first theme dealt with feeling empowered through re-engaging in golf and enjoying connecting with relatable peers, despite initial nervousness about their golf abilities and fear of disappointing others.

### **When care becomes constraint**

The second theme conveyed feeling supported in the program, while also navigating the challenges of receiving unwanted support.

### **Negotiating social and play priorities in shared physical activity (PA) spaces**

The third theme described enjoying participating in the program but in this perspective there was more focus on the game itself rather than socializing, and it involved some frustration when others did not share this focus on golf.

## Take Home Message

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- This inclusive recreation program created opportunities for PA, social connection, and empowerment, which positively impacted golfers' well-being.
- Participants' varied experiences highlight the need to balance social connection, individualized support, and diverse interests to create inclusive and enjoyable opportunities for PA.



We also interviewed care partners about their experience with the program and social support, how participating in the program impacted their resilience, and the program's contribution as an inclusive recreation program.

## Research Aim

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To explore care partners' experiences of social support while engaging in the FTLOG program and their perceptions of how program participation impacted their resilience, coping, and quality of life.

## Methods

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Qualitative interviews were conducted with 6 men with dementia who participated in the golf program.



## Results

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### 1. A place for us

*An authentically friendly space:* Staff and volunteers' kindness and passion cultivated a welcoming and inclusive environment, trusting relationships, and a sense of security.

*Together in the journey:* Care partners valued building meaningful connections with others they could relate to, which fostered a sense of community.

### 2. Filling my cup

The FTLOG program supported care partners through opportunities for respite and social connection, which offered them a sense of relief and replenished their well-being.

*"I get to be the wife again":* Participating in the program was a positive experience for program pairs, which may have helped them reconnect in ways that reflected their romantic relationship. However, some care partners also appreciated having time apart from their spouse and opportunities for independence.

### 3. It's ok

Observing other participants created opportunities for care partners to feel reassured that some of their partners' behaviours or changes were normal. Seeing that other care partners also experienced difficult emotions, like guilt or shame for becoming frustrated with their spouse, validated that it was ok to feel this way. Sharing these experiences was an important way that social support was offered and received among care partners.

## Take Home Message

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Participating in leisure activities, especially with the person someone provides care for, contributed to fulfilling care partners' needs and well-being. Among staff and volunteers, being positive and encouraging, and always treating individuals with dementia with dignity and respect, is crucial for facilitating an authentically inclusive program.