The Effects of Poetry in Elderly Populations with Memory Impairment
Burton M1, Clifford K1, Corbett J1, Eckenstein M1, Jorgenson J1, Kulaga S1, No H1, White N1, Christensen J2
1Robert M Larner MD College of Medicine at the University of Vermont 2Department of Psychological Science, University of Vermont

BACKGROUND
- Neuropsychological processing of poetry and music are similar, “Phenome-level language units” found in both music and simple rhyming poetry contribute to learning and recalling information2-3.
- Small, yet growing body of research exists on the therapeutic use of poetry interventions in individuals with memory impairment4-5.
- Poetry has shown promising effects in this population, akin to the success of musical interventions2-9.
- We intend to evaluate the effect of poetry in elderly population with memory loss and/or dementia.

METHODS
- Two observers independently evaluated 12 poetry sessions at the Converse Home’s Gardenview memory impairment facility. Observations of the poetry group were tallied using Likert scale forms with predetermined categories.
- T-tests were conducted to compare reading sessions to writing sessions in terms of tallied marks in each category.
- ANOVA and post-hoc comparisons were conducted to compare tallied measures of mood and behaviors within the reading and writing sessions; as well as to compare degree of participation within the writing session.

RESULTS
On average, 9 (range, 7-11) residents attended each session.

Figure 1: Average number of observations for given behaviors [column data] during reading sessions (n=12) and final writing sessions (n=10). Average proportion of residents [scatter data] displaying given behaviors rated from 0 (none of the residents) to 5 (most to all of the residents).

Figure 2. For both reading and writing sessions, positive behavioral measures were statistically greater than discordant mood (p<0.05), but not statistically different from each other. Positive measures included communication, interest, and enjoyment for reading sessions and communication and enjoyment for writing sessions.

Figure 3: Residents were more likely to engage without prompting (x=3.3) or with some prompting (x=3.1) than to not participate (x=1.6) in the final writing session (p<0.05).

REFERENCES