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Rehabilitation approaches

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Examining social engagement of residents living with dementia both in and outside the nursing home: Rehabilitation approaches

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Introduction and Aim

Dementia is a chronic progressive condition characterized by an ongoing decline in physical, cognitive and social functioning⁽¹⁾. More than 35 million people in the world live with dementia, a condition with severe consequences for the persons with dementia and their relatives⁽²⁾.

The physical, cognitive and social decline in functioning limits social engagement⁽³⁾ increasing the risk of social exclusion and lowering quality of life⁽⁴⁾. The progression of dementia leads to increasing care demands on family and professional caregivers⁽¹⁾. Eventually people with dementia—especially in western societies—may have to move to a nursing home further increasing the risk of social exclusion⁽⁵⁾, since the person with dementia is removed from their former social relations.

The aim of this study is to explore how nursing home residents who live with moderate to severe dementia experience engagement in meaningful social activities with the longer term objective to identify ways to better promote their social inclusion.

METHODS

Using a multiple-case study design⁽⁵⁾ two nursing home settings serves as data sources and will include:

- Participant observations⁽⁶⁾ and photos of nursing home residents social engagement within the nursing home and the local community.
- Conversations with nursing home residents during social activities⁽⁷⁾.
- Conversations (storytelling) with nursing home residents after social activities, using prompts (e.g., photos)^(8,9).

The nursing home residents will be involved in the interpretation of results using principles of Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) methods⁽¹⁰⁾. Access to two nursing homes serving people with dementia located in the Region of Northern Denmark have granted data collection taking place until summer 2018.

The study is approved by the Danish Data Protection Agency and will follow the guidelines of Alzheimer Europe⁽¹¹⁾ regarding consent and information gathering when involving nursing home residents with dementia in research.

EXCERPTS OF PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Data analysis: Data collection period was completed in July 2018, with data analysis in its initial stage. Collected data will be subject to a system analysis based on Luhmann's system theory with special focus on developing the professional caregivers reflection theory.

Preliminary themes:

The professional caregiver's attitude to social activities:

- The assessment of the resident's need for social activities
- The assessment of the resident's physical, social and cognitive function in relation to social activities

The nursing home resident's response to social activities:

- Verbal response to social activities
- Nonverbal response to social activities

The physical and socio-cultural environment:

- The influence of physical space & interior design on social engagement
- The influence of an institutional or homelike atmosphere
- The influence of nursing home organization, fundamental values and function of professional caregivers

The results of this study form the basis for development of a reflection theory in a subsequent study, with the aim of providing an empirical and theoretically more qualified (i.e., evidence-based) and well-founded (i.e., from tacit to explicit knowledge) alternative to how the professional caregivers reflect on rehabilitation interventions focused on resident engagement in social activities.

EXPECTED IMPLICATIONS

For policy makers:

- Provide practice-oriented knowledge and insights for development of future dementia policies

For practitioners:

- Awareness of professional caregiver roles and justifications for practice
- Transform tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge and thereby contribute to scientific and professional justifications for action (evidence-based practice)
- Contribute to practice-oriented research and increase the practical relevance of research results

For researchers:

- Provide practice-oriented knowledge to the scientific gap in the field of dementia and rehabilitation research
- Contribute to practice-oriented research and increase the practical relevance of research results

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