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CARING IN NURSING HOMES TO PROMOTE AUTONOMY AND PARTICIPATION

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Background: Autonomy and participation are threatened within the group of older people living in nursing homes. Evidence suggests that healthcare personnel act on behalf of older people but are still excluding them from decision-making in everyday care.

Objective: The purpose was to describe registered nurses' experience of caring for older people in nursing homes to promote autonomy and participation.

Research Design: A descriptive design with a phenomenological approach was used. Data were collected by semi-structured individual interviews. Analysis was guided by Giorgi's method.

Participants & Research Context: A total of 13 registered nurses from 10 nursing homes participated.

Ethical Considerations: Ethical approval was obtained from the Regional Research Ethics Committee. Informed consent was achieved and confidentiality guaranteed.

Findings: The essence of caring for older people in nursing homes to promote autonomy and participation consisted of registered nurses' awareness of older people's frailty and the impact of illness to support health and well-being, and awareness of acknowledgement in everyday life and trusting relationships. Paying attention to older people by being open to the persons' wishes were aspects that relied on registered nurses' trusting relationships with older people, their relatives and surrounding healthcare personnel. The awareness reflected challenges in caring to promote older people's right to autonomy and participation in nursing homes. Registered nurses' strategies, hopes for and/or concerns about development of everyday life in nursing homes were revealed and mirrored their engagement in caring for older people.

Discussion & Conclusion: Awareness of older people's frailty in nursing homes and the importance of maintained health and well-being were described as the main source for promoting autonomy and participation. Everyday life and care in nursing homes needs to be addressed from both older people's and healthcare personnel's perspectives, to promote autonomy and participation for residents in nursing homes.

Biography

Maria Hedman is a PhD student in the Department of Caring Science at the Faculty of Medicine, Uppsala University. She is a Specialist Nurse in care for older people. She has completed her MSc in Caring Science and is working as a Lecturer at University of Gävle since 2010. She is a RN since 1996, working mostly in care for older people. The research topic for her thesis is autonomy and participation for older people when living with long term conditions such as chronic illness.

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