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Things that matter to residents in nursing homes and the nursing care implications

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**Background**

While a focus on individualizing care for residents in nursing homes is now recognized, there is need to improve understanding about things that matter to residents during their care in nursing homes.

- By year 2040, the age 65 or older portion of the global population is predicted to increase from 7% to 14%.
- Approximately 4% of all persons who are 65 and older or 1.5 million Americans reside in nursing homes.
- Investigations in care of residents in nursing homes reveal a serious need for improvement.
- In order to improve care, exploring person-centered care in nursing homes has emerged with a focus on changing the culture in nursing homes.
- Operationalizing a culture that embraces person-centered care has been slow to develop in nursing homes. Only 5% of nursing home directors stated that their nursing home had completely transformed their nursing home cultures to include person-centered care.
- In order to implement person-centered care, practitioners need to understand what matters to residents.
- There is a lack of research that targets residents’ descriptions of things that matter to residents in nursing homes.
- Embracing the uniqueness of each resident by including things that matter to them in their care may enhance person-centered care in nursing homes.

**Purpose**

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to:

1. Describe things that matter to residents in the long-term care section of nursing homes.

The aims of the study addressed the following questions:

1.1 What are things that matter in the words of the residents?
1.2 What made these things matter to residents?
1.3 What things that matter to residents in nursing homes may be included in their care?
1.4 Are things that matter to residents captured in current person-centered care practices in nursing homes?

**Qualitative Descriptive Design**

- A qualitative description method was used to:
  1. Draw from the ideas of naturalistic inquiry where residents living in nursing homes were studied in their natural state.
  2. Generate findings close to the data and required the researcher to draw inferences with rigor by moving the data toward some new idea or concept.

**Sampling Method**

- Purposive sampling was used to invite participants who resided in the long-term care sections of three mid-west nursing homes.
  1. A total sample size of 10 residents completed two face-to-face interviews.
  2. Eligibility criteria:
    1. Age 65 and older.
    2. Reside in the long-term care section of nursing homes.
  3. Complete the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MOCA) with a score of 18-26 (mild-cognitive impairment) or 26 and higher (normal cognitive status).

**Design and Sample**

- **Eligibility Criteria:**
  1. Age 65 and older.
  2. Reside in the long-term care section of nursing homes.
  3. Complete the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MOCA) with a score of 18-26 (mild-cognitive impairment) or 26 and higher (normal cognitive status).

**Results/Conclusions**

Residents’ positive and negative experiences revealed four meaningful clusters that emerged from the data:

1. Accepting life in the nursing home
2. Enduring loss
3. Relishing good care
4. Getting by

Resident’s emotions of pleasure and contentment, yet other times pensive sadness and regret, divulged a powerful message: Positive and negative things that mattered to residents influenced their well-being while living in the nursing homes.

Of major importance, this study provided direction for addressing the question: How can nurses manage residents’ positive and negative aspects of care? Assisting residents to build on opportunities that would help them manage limitations would lead to healthy transitions in nursing homes. The key findings revealed significance of humanistic caring when staff members formed close relationships with residents. The residents’ intuitively knowing when nurses rendered care with authentic presence revealed significance of nurses investing in attitudes of person-centeredness. Ideas for developing open environments where residents feel welcome to share their losses and powerful message: Positive and negative things that mattered to residents influenced their well-being while living in the nursing homes.

**Implications for Practice**

This study revealed things that matter from residents’ perspectives and may lead nursing home caregivers to:

- Practice care that includes things that are most important to residents in nursing homes.
- Expand on current initiatives, such as person-centered care, for improving quality of care in nursing homes.
- Serve as the basis for developing educational tools aimed at improving gerontological care in nursing homes. These tools could enhance nursing education for nursing home staff and nursing students.